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Doctor of Education

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by

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ABSTRACT

The Perceptions of Students, Teachers, and Parents Regarding the Value of the

LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines Program

by

Jessica Anderson

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of children committing extreme acts of violence prompting many schools to adopt and implement character education programs. Character education has been defined as educating students to understand, act upon, and care about universal virtues like respect, truthfulness, responsibility, and caring. There are many character education programs available from which a school's staff can choose. The LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program is one that focuses on producing a caring community of responsible citizens for life.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to evaluate the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents regarding the value of a character education program that was implemented in 2003 at a public elementary school located in a small urban area in East Tennessee. In order to gather data, teachers and students participated in one-on-one interviews and parents completed open-ended surveys.

The findings from this study suggested that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program has had a positive effect on the school participating in the study. Students explained that the program has helped them and that they use the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at home and school. Teachers perceived the program to be a beneficial addition to the school's curriculum. Parents perceived the program as valuable and reported their children discussing the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at home. The teacher and parent participants gave several

suggestions for improving the program including: further staff development, additional information being sent to parents, and meeting the goal of having consistent use and implementation of the program on a school-wide basis.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my supportive and encouraging husband, Stephen. It is through his friendship and love that I find confidence and strength.

This study is dedicated to my parents who modeled the importance of education and lifelong learning.

In addition, this study is dedicated in memory of Dr. Russell West, a thoughtful teacher, knowledgeable mentor, and inspiring person.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Alexis de Tocqueville was credited during the early 19th century for stating, "America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, she will cease to be great" (as cited in Schaeffer, 2003, p. 37). After watching an average news broadcast, one might question if America is still good. Every night there is a plethora of stories including violence, dishonesty, and even murder. These acts of violence are no longer only committed by hardened criminals; oftentimes, they are carried out by school-aged children. For example, on April 20, 1999, history was made when two students opened fire in their Colorado school building killing 12 students, a teacher, and themselves making it the deadliest U.S. high school shooting to date ("Police Compiling Final Columbine Report," 1999). The Columbine tragedy was not the first act of school violence but it did seem to trigger a string of school shootings. For instance, a few months later a 13-year-old boy in Fort Gibson, Oklahoma, brought and fired a 9-mm semiautomatic handgun at his school, injuring four classmates ("Police: Boy, 13, Doesn't Know," 1999). When asked about a motive, the boy could not give a reason for his actions. Again, in March 2001, a 15-year-old boy brought a gun and 40 bullets to his San Diego high school. Thirty bullets later, 2 children were dead and 13 others were injured. The student who committed the crime showed no remorse and was unable to give any reason for the act of violence (Harris & Isernhagen, 2003).

The frequency of school shootings with children showing no remorse and not being able to give reasons for their actions has prompted numerous research studies to be conducted. The researchers were searching for the reasons behind the violence and overall lack of moral values in students today. For example, the Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center conducted an investigation into 37 incidents of severe school violence (Kagan, 2001). The results of this study indicated that there was not a consistent demographic profile of an attacker.

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Some of the students had histories of neglect whereas others came from intact families. Additionally, some of the students were popular whereas other students were considered outcasts. Finally, some of the students were failing academically, whereas others were very successful in their academic efforts. Nevertheless, Kagan reported that more than three quarters of those students who had used excessive violence at school had a grievance of some type. Two thirds stated they felt harassed or bullied at school. Therefore, their acts of violence appeared to be attempts to get revenge or end the harassment (Kagan). An additional study was performed in order to pinpoint common characteristics among students initiating school shootings (Kidd & Meyer, 2002). The results revealed six common characteristics among violent students: (a) peer rejection, (b) verbal threats, (c) interest in media that is violent, (d) history of violent behavior, (e) suicidal ideation, and (f) violent writings (Kidd & Meyer).

Because of this trend of violence at schools, educators must ask themselves: "Why are students lacking basic values and morals, and what can be done to instill life long values in students to allow them to function as productive members of society?" Possibly, as students learn to respect and accept others, bullying will decrease; this in turn, might eliminate the random acts of violence currently occurring at schools across the nation. In order to teach respect and prevent future attacks on classmates, many schools are adopting character education programs (Kagan, 2001). These character education programs strive to instill basic values and morals in young children and provide them with tools to treat others with respect, honesty, and courtesy (Schaeffer, 2003).

There are many character education programs from which school staff can choose. This study focused on a program that is designed to teach children how to live as responsible citizens. Known as the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines method, the program is a component of Susan Kovalik's Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI) Model (Kovalik, 1994). There are 18 LIFESKILLS and five Lifelong Guidelines. As opposed to teaching character education in isolated lessons or at a certain time of the day, the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines method

is integrated into every aspect of school life. The program is designed to create a school-wide common language as well as to serve as a positive approach to behavior management. The desired outcome of the program is a caring community of responsible citizens (Kovalik).

Before a school can begin to implement any character education program, the entire school community must be prepared to live by the program's standards. The teachers, support staff, and administrators must practice what they preach (Ryan, 1995). If the staff is not able to set a good example, then the program will not be effective. Berkowitz (1998) explained that a school that teaches character education but does not model it will be less effective than a school that does not teach character but models it in their daily relationships. Therefore, it is vital that teachers have and model values in their daily interactions with students, colleagues, and parents.

Once a school is ready to make that commitment, then the staff members need to develop or adopt a program they all believe in. According to Zarra (2000), schools developing a character education program must consider the purpose, core values, and process in order to be successful. As previously stated, the purpose is to develop lifelong character traits. The school staff members should write a vision statement that includes the purpose of the program. All teachers must support the core values that the school decides to teach. If there is not consensus on a particular value, then that value needs to be "taken off the table" (DeRoche, 2000, p. 33).

Finally, the process of character education is how the school plans to implement and assess the program. In order to experience maximum success, the program needs to be implemented in school culture, both in and out of the classroom, and at home (Zarra, 2000). Parents must be aware of the program and be involved in making home school connections to reach the students. The school's staff members must determine what their expectations are, decide upon measurable indicators of success, and establish the goals they hope to meet prior to implementation. Following implementation, the program should be continually assessed and evaluated to ensure success.

In addition to purpose, core values, and process, there are critical factors a school must consider when implementing a character education program. Leadership is a key factor of success when implementing any new program. The instructional leader must initiate and support the program, provide resources and training, accept accountability, and model the core values of the program (DeRoche, 2000).

There is little training in the use of character education programs available for students who are studying to be teachers (Berkowitz, 1998). Therefore, it is important that the instructional leader recognizes that his or her staff might not have had any training in promoting character and that they might need several inservices and follow-up staff development activities. In addition to teachers, parents must be educated about the program and the program's goals. A partnership should be formed between the school, parents, and community to have a well-rounded and meaningful program (DeRoche, 2000).

If a school does not thoroughly adopt or develop a program, negative results can occur. According to Kohn (1997), there are several character education programs that have the unstated purpose of making children work harder and do what they are told to do. The children are drilled into behaving in certain ways instead of encouraging critical thinking about why it is important to have values. The values are often taught on a specific day, week, or month. This type of approach is not likely to result in the adoption of these lifelong character traits. Kohn criticized the programs that focused on extrinsic rewards and motivation. He stated that children who receive extrinsic rewards for "good" behaviors are less likely to continue using those behaviors. The rewards seem to prevent the child from internalizing the behaviors and using them during decision-making processes. Kohn explained that awards are not a productive way to reinforce character traits. When some children are singled out as "winners," making it a competition, one child can interfere with another child's success. Kohn emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivation in order to successfully teach character education.

Educators must recognize the importance in selecting a character education program. It is the school-aged children who are the next generation in America. If the next generation does not internalize and apply basic moral values, then what will they teach their children? As Alexis de Tocqueville recommended, we must keep America good (Schaeffer, 2003). In order to keep America good, people must have morals. Therefore, character education programs should be carefully selected and properly implemented in order to have the best chance of reaching children. Researchers have reported mixed results of the current character education programs. However, educators must not stop until they find the best program for students' needs; the problem is too big and too important to overlook.

Statement of the Problem

When implementing a character education program, a significant amount of time and energy must be put forth. The staff at the public school that participated in this study weighed the options of implementing the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program for at least a year. Following visits to schools incorporating the program and discussions with teachers who had used the program, a decision was made to adopt the approach school wide. During a summer inservice in 2003, an associate from Susan Kovalik and Associates visited the school and presented a day-long workshop. Teachers were provided with a LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines book that detailed all of the traits as well as implementation ideas. At this point, there has not been any formal evaluation performed on this program.

It is important for the administrator and teachers at the school where the research was conducted to know if the time and energy they have set aside for LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines is truly improving the behavior and decision-making abilities of the 450 students involved. If the program is proven to have no impact or a negative impact on behavior, educators should reevaluate the program. It was essential to assess and evaluate the influence the current program had over students' behavior. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative case

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study was to determine the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents regarding the value of a character education program that was implemented in 2003 at a public elementary school located in a small urban area in East Tennessee.

Research Questions

The following research questions served as the focal point of the study:

1. What are the perceptions of students regarding the value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines character education program?

2. What are the perceptions of the teachers regarding the value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines character education program?

3. What are the perceptions of the parents regarding the value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines character education program?

Significance of the Study

Because of the increased interest in developing character in children, several character education programs have emerged. Berkowitz (1998) described character education programs as "The intentional intervention to promote the formation of any or all aspects of moral functioning of individuals" (p. 3). The range of programs varies in many ways but all share one common goal. The goal is to develop good lifelong character traits (Zarra, 2000). In order to accomplish this goal, the program must be designed by keeping in mind several factors that lead to success.

Research has shown that character education programs have the potential to benefit children but they are not always implemented in a manner that best serves children. Therefore, it is essential for schools to evaluate and assess their current efforts at teaching character education to determine if they are achieving positive results or actually undermining their efforts through a poorly implemented program.

Delimitations

This study was confined to one elementary school located in a small urban area of East Tennessee.

Limitations

The researcher was a teacher at the school where the research was conducted and helped initially implement the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. Therefore, the researcher had biases and preconceptions that must be considered. As a major leader in implementing the program and arranging the inservice to teach educators about the program, the researcher had biases leaning towards showing the success of the program. In addition, there are numerous factors that may contribute to behavior changes in children. It is impossible to pinpoint the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program as being the sole variable initiating the change.

Overview of the Study

Chapter 1 included an introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, and limitations. Chapter 2 contains an indepth literature review of books and journal articles relating to character education in general, the Integrated Thematic Instruction Model, and the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used while conducting the research for the study. Chapter 4 presents and analyzes the data obtained. Finally, Chapter 5 consists of a conclusion and recommendations for further practice.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature has three main foci: character education, the Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI) Model, and the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines approach to character education. First, character education will be defined and discussed, types of character education programs will be examined, key components of successful programs will be identified, and pros and cons of implementing programs will be listed. Second, ITI will be explored and explained. Third, the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines approach to character education will be examined.

Definition of Character Education

Kagan (2001) explained that the school shootings in recent years were just one symptom of a larger problem. Kagan identified this problem as a breakdown of community, caring for others, and a strong moral orientation. A nation-wide survey revealed that out of 15,000 middle and high school students, 75% of boys and 60% of girls admitted to hitting someone due to anger within the past year. Also, 54% of middle school students and 70% of high school students admitted that they had cheated on a test within the past year. Additionally, 47% of the high school students confessed to stealing from a store within the past year (Kagan). Weissbourd (2003) acknowledged that the public holds schools responsible for solving the lack of values in the youth today. Because of these statistics, character education has been placed on the forefront of educators' minds; however, character education is not a new idea and it has a lengthy history.

Character education can be traced back to Aristotle; yet throughout history, thinkers have argued whether schools can truly teach virtues (Noddings, 2002). Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Intelligence plus character--that is the goal of true education" (as cited in Singh, 2001, p. 49). Despite the acknowledgement for the need of character education, schools have often

focused on the academic side of education ignoring the side that focuses on social and emotional development (Elias, Wang, Weissberg, Zins, & Walberg, 2002).

Within the last century, educators have gone back and forth regarding the decision of whether schools should teach morals. In recent decades, the consensus has been that schools should remain value neutral (Romanowski, 2003). Additionally, schools have avoided morality discussions for fear they would overstep the separation of church and state (Romanowski). Educators have also expressed concern about parental objections to character education being taught in the schools (Kagan, 2001). However, following a recent Gallup Poll, over 90% of people surveyed stated schools should teach basic values (Romanowski).

Character education is defined as "educating for understanding, caring about, and acting on such core universal values as respect, responsibility, honesty, and caring" (Schaeffer, 2003, p. 37). The main goal of character education is to assist students in learning to make decisions based on a set of values they have internalized (Schaeffer). These social and emotional learning programs assist students to develop the skills to understand, recognize, and appropriately deal with emotions; to learn how to show and feel genuine care and concern for others; to make decisions that are responsible and well thought out; and to establish positive, productive relationships with peers (Weissberg, Resnik, Payton, & O'Brien, 2003).

Research in Character Education

The current need for a focus on character traits has spawned a new generation of character education programs. There are numerous types of programs available for schools to adopt and implement. However, schools must be cautious and assess whether the program accomplishes the true goal of character education: Students learn to make decisions based on a set of values they have internalized (Schaeffer, 2003). Researchers have found that students can explain the difference between right and wrong and why, but some still choose not to live by those values (Romanowski, 2003). As explained by Romanowski, one student stated, "Everyone

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knows what honesty is. It's just that many don't want to be honest. We know what's right and wrong. We just don't do it" (p. 32). Weissbourd (2003) noted that students could justify their decisions by rationalizing that society is corrupt and others do not always live by moral values. Therefore, the true challenge schools face when selecting a program is in deciding how to take the program a step further. Instead of solely teaching students what values are, the students must be taught why they are important and internalize them to use throughout their lives. Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg (1989) contended that stimulated development of moral judgment is not a temporary effect of learning the right things to say but has a lasting effect that can be generalized to problems outside of the classroom.

There have been several studies done on character education and its success in the classroom. As a first-grade teacher, Singh (2001) conducted one such study. She was interested in including character education in her classroom after being shocked by a news story involving children under the age of 10 sexually molesting another child. She did some research on the programs available and realized that she could implement these core values into her curriculum as well as her classroom environment. She adopted the six pillars of character traits in the Character Counts! program: (a) respect, (b) responsibility, (c) trustworthiness, (d) fairness, (e) caring, and (f) citizenship. She began using classroom jobs to teach responsibility and used literature to illustrate the other values. In order to assess the success of her program, she did a survey with her students asking them to define and give examples of each of the pillars of character. She reported that the students were unable to explain the terms, with the exception of responsibility, but were sometimes able to exhibit the behaviors (Singh). Following her survey, she implemented the Character Counts! program in her curriculum and classroom community. She had the children participate in community-building inclusion activities in order to develop a trusting and safe environment filled with respect, caring, and responsibility. She sent home Responsible Ralph, a bear puppet, so that the children could identify ways they were responsible at home. Through this activity, and other activities like this, Singh was able to involve the

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parents, in turn, in the Character Counts! program making it more meaningful to the students. Finally, following five months of implementation, Singh decided it was time to assess the success of her program. In order to do this she administered the same student survey and found that 90% of the students showed a greater understanding of the character traits.

Singh (2001) also reported that the students' classroom behavior improved during the five-month period. She summed up the differences in two areas. First, she stated that the occurrences of misbehaviors decreased significantly; the classroom was more positive and calm, and the students used the new vocabulary to work out problems. Secondly, she noted that students had higher expectations for themselves and their peers. They tattled less and used their words to solve conflicts. Singh's results were very impressive considering this was not a school-wide program, but one she implemented herself. Singh's results could lead one to imagine how effective this would be if the entire school adopted the program and all parents were educated in the goals of the program and the Character Counts! language was used school wide.

Like Singh (2001), other teachers and schools have experienced success with character education programs. Colgan (2003) reported about an anecdotal survey conducted in a public school system in Virginia. According to Colgan, the system has earned national acclaim for its character education programs. The program selects a character trait to focus on each month, integrating the trait into the curriculum. Results of the initial anecdotal survey indicated positive results of the program. However, there are currently other researchers looking at students' surveys, statistics on school violence, achievement, and attendance to determine if the program is effective (Colgan).

Types of Character Education: Curricular Versus Instructional Approaches

Singh (2001) selected one character education program out of the many programs available. After school staff members decide to include character education in their curriculum, they must then decide what approach or program fits the needs of the school and community.

Typically, schools will discover that the programs available tend to fall into two categories: curricular and instructional approaches (Kagan, 2001).

If a school or teacher selects a curricular approach to implementing character education, then the virtues will be connected to the curriculum. Many programs promote separate lessons taught on just the virtues or character traits. Little effort is made to connect the concepts with the students' real lives or decisions they might face. Many teachers take the separate lessons a step closer to full integration by teaching a virtue of the week or a virtue of the month (Kagan, 2001). Some curricular-focused programs encourage teachers to incorporate the values into the existing curriculum. For example, the teacher can discuss the virtues through literature, historical figures, and current events occurring in the world (Kagan).

In contrast to curricular programs, instructional approaches to character education are built on the idea of implicit curriculum (Kagan, 2001). The implicit curriculum is *how* teachers teach. Kagan considered the implicit curriculum as being just as influential on learning as the explicit curriculum, or *what* educators teach. A teacher might incorporate an activity that requires empathy, active listening, and cooperation to be successful. By engaging the students in a task that requires the use of the targeted virtues, the students have the opportunity to practice using them and hopefully begin to internalize them.

Kagan (2001) reminded educators that curricular and instructional approaches are not mutually exclusive. A teacher can teach a lesson on virtues and use cooperative learning activities to require the use of the virtue being taught. An effective teacher might use both methods to teach the students about values (explicit curriculum) while providing learning opportunities for the students to use the values and learn first hand their importance (implicit curriculum).

Kagan (2001) pointed out that the instructional approach was more effective in teaching children values. He stated that he felt if a teacher focused on truthfulness for one week or one month, then after that time period was over, the student was no longer practicing or thinking

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about being truthful. On the other hand, if students are given daily opportunities to use truthfulness, then they are more likely to internalize and use it in their lives. Schaeffer (2003) agreed with Kagan, explaining that the character education programs where values are isolated in separated lessons failed to build a student's internal understanding of the values. The student misses out on opportunities to use the values in decision making and collaborative work projects.

Key Components of Successful Programs

As with everything in life, there does not seem to be one character education program that is best or that meets all needs. However, there are several key components to successful programs that have been identified by researchers, educators, and students. As cited in Shelby (2003), John Dewey suggested that educators should "aim at making the methods of learning, of acquiring intellectual power, and of assimilating subject matter, such that they will render behavior more enlightened, more consistent, more vigorous than it otherwise might be" (p. 338). If character education programs intend to create consistent, vigorous, and enlightened behaviors, there are several criteria that must be met.

As reported by Schaeffer (2003), the Character Education Partnership has produced a list of 11 principles of effective character education programs. An effective program:

1. promotes core ethical values (thinking, feeling, and behaving);

2. defines to include thinking, feeling, and behaving;

3. promotes core values in all phases of school life;

4. fosters a caring community;

5. provides opportunities for moral action;

6. includes meaningful and challenging curriculum;

7. strives to develop intrinsic motivation;

8. involves all school staff;

9. requires moral leadership from teachers and students;

10. involves parents and community; and

11. assesses results. (p. 38)

The first principle that the Character Education Partnership listed was that the program must promote core ethical values (Schaeffer, 2003). Weissberg et al. (2003) added to this principle by stating the program should be grounded in theory and research. In addition, child developmental stages should be considered when implementing a character education program. The core-values vocabulary words might seem awkward when first using them but after integrating the vocabulary into the daily class discussions and directions, the students will become more familiar with the concepts (Singh, 2001).

Secondly, character education programs should include thinking, feeling, and behaving (Schaeffer, 2003). Romanowski (2003) recommended that feelings be included in the planning phase of implementing a program. Students' thoughts and feelings should be considered when designing a program in order to facilitate success of the program. If educators are unaware of students' needs and feelings, a program that reaches that population will be difficult to develop. Romanowski interviewed students who reported that in order for character education programs to be effective, there must be ample opportunity for nonthreatening class discussions. Thus, the students desire the opportunity to think and voice their thoughts and opinions (Romanowski).

Next, a program must require an approach that promotes use of the identified core values in all phases of school life (Schaeffer, 2003). Students should not be expected to discuss and use core values only during guidance class or a lesson on a virtue. Educators should promote and expect the use of values in all aspects of school life. For example, regardless of whether the student is in the cafeteria or in physical education class, he or she should be expected to use responsibility and friendship. Kagan (2001) explained,

> If teachers use a variety of structures in the classroom, students can practice the virtues on an ongoing basis in a number of different situations--making it more likely that students will acquire the virtues as enduring aspects of their character. (p. 54)

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The more opportunities teachers provide to practice what they are preaching, the more likely students will internalize the virtue. Through this application of values in their daily lives, students learn to recognize and handle their emotions, accept different opinions, and make wise decisions (Weissberg et al., 2003). In essence, the old saying, "Practice makes perfect" is applicable to teaching character education traits.

The fourth principle set by the Character Education Partnership is that a program must foster a caring school environment and community (Schaeffer, 2003). Weissberg et al. (2003) explained that a positive connection must exist between students and their school. This connection aids in the creation of a caring environment both in the classroom and school wide. Harris and Isernhagen (2003) noted that a warm, positive environment will decrease violence at school, stating, "A school climate that treats everyone with respect will, by its very nature, go a long way toward reducing the problem of bullying" (p. 45). A nonthreatening community of learners must exist at a school in order for character education to be effective.

In addition, a character education program must provide opportunities for moral action. Instead of teachers and students solely "talking the talk," there must also be occasions for students and teachers to "walk the walk." In order for this to occur, there must be an instructional approach to implementing character education. As teachers present lessons, there must be accompanying activities that require students to put their morals to use. Kagan (2001) suggested incorporating a "Pass-N-Praise" activity. This involves students sitting around a table or carpet passing the work of a student around and openly praising or validating the work. The more students use the virtues being targeted, the more likely they are to apply them throughout their life experiences and decision-making processes.

Character education programs must include a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum (Schaeffer, 2003). One of the chief complaints from students concerning character education programs is that they are geared toward younger children and high school students stated that they feel as though they are being talked down to (Romanowski, 2003). Programs

must be developmentally appropriate for the age group toward which they are geared. The program must challenge students. Romanowski (2003) reported that one student expressed,

> They are teaching us how to be nice to people so they give us a word search. You don't learn how to be nice to people by doing a word search. I don't think you can teach character with busywork. (p. 33)

Because of this student's feelings of being insulted by inappropriate busywork and a lack of challenge, he or she considered the endeavor was not beneficial. Work like this discourages students from opening up and actively listening to the reasons why it is important to live by values. Romanowski reported that students voiced their desire for the character education ideas to be integrated into the daily classroom lessons and not taught in isolation. Rusnak (1998) supported the students' wishes. He proposed that character education is not a course in itself, but is in every subject. Or, that the traits being taught can be found within all curricula.

The seventh principle of an effective character education program is that it strives to develop intrinsic motivation (Schaeffer, 2003). Should students abide by moral values just to please an adult? What happens when the adult is no longer present? Students must live by values for themselves. Ryan and Bohlin (1999) observed, "Character education is about inspiring students to do the good; interesting them in worthwhile pursuits, both academic and extracurricular; and helping them to internalize good habits" (p. 239). Character education is not about stickers, pizza parties, and competition. It is about providing students with the tools necessary to become thriving, responsible citizens in a world that is full of temptations and opportunities to be deceitful.

The Character Education Partnership recommended that character education involve all staff members (Schaeffer, 2003). Not only should all staff members participate and model the traits being taught but high quality professional development and ongoing support should also be provided. The professional development opportunities should include theoretical knowledge, coaching activities, collaboration with colleagues, and practicing effective teaching strategies (Weissberg et al., 2003). Teachers must also recognize that they, too, are engaged in moral

growth (Weissbourd, 2003). According to Weissbourd, many adults feel their moral growth ends during youth and they cannot change; however, new adult development models indicate that adults' ethical qualities are not static, but change depending upon different factors. Teachers must be open to developing and improving their own moral standards in order to model appropriate behaviors to students.

Subsequently, character education programs must require moral leadership from both staff and students (Schaeffer, 2003). As Elias et al. (2002) stated, "Educators cannot expect more from children and teens than they do from themselves" (p. 30). Educators must have high expectations for themselves and model moral behavior to students. Teachers must practice what they preach with students, colleagues, and administrators. Teachers must also provide opportunities for students to develop autonomy and influence (Schaps, 2003). Not only are students able to exhibit moral leadership but students are also rewarded intrinsically when they have a voice in classroom decisions.

Character education programs should focus on recruiting parents and community members as partners (Schaeffer, 2003). If appropriate moral values are being modeled and discussed at school, at home, and in the community, connections will be made by the students and they will have a better possibility of internalizing the values. Schools must go out of their way to reach parents and provide resources for them to meet their children's needs (Elias et al., 2002). Like triangulation in research, a student should ideally learn character education from a variety of sources.

The Character Education Partnership also identified assessment of the program as a key component to success (Schaeffer, 2003). What worked 50 years ago may not work today as needs and dilemmas students face change over time. Therefore, programs must be continually evaluated, assessed, and tweaked to meet the current needs of the students.

There are countless character education programs available. The Character Education Partnership has developed 11 principles that a successful character education program should

follow (Schaeffer, 2003). Schools can evaluate programs based on these principles and select and implement the program that meets the needs of their students.

Pros and Cons of Programs

When a character education program is implemented effectively, the students as well as the community are able to reap numerous long-lasting benefits. Schaps (2003) reported that research indicates that positive effects of the programs last through middle and high school. According to Schaps, middle school students from an elementary school that had implemented a community building program outperformed students from schools without such a program. Teachers described better behavior and fewer episodes of misconduct. In another study (Schaps), students who participated in a social development program had lower rates of violent behavior, alcohol abuse, and sexual experimentation when compared with students from schools not implementing the program. Schaeffer (2003) noted that effective implementation could lead to reductions in absenteeism, anxiety, and drug abuse. He added, "Good implementation can lead to significant gains in prosocial behavior, attachment to school and class, democratic values, conflict resolution skills, moral reasoning, responsibility and respect, self-efficacy, self-control, social skills, and respect for teachers" (p. 38). Numerous benefits are awaiting students following the successful implementation of an effective and appropriate character education program.

If a school does not thoroughly adopt or develop a program or if they select a program that does not meet the criteria of the key principles, negative results can occur. Shelby (2003) reported that many programs focus on rules, punishment, and obedience. This focus communicates to students that they should behave using morals because it is the rule not because it is morally right. Or, that they should behave to be obedient and to avoid punishment (Shelby). Barger (2000) reported of Kohlberg's theory that people progress in moral development and reasoning through six stages and three levels . The first level, preconventional, consists of stage

one and stage two. In the first stage during childhood, people behave as they are told to by an authority figure, usually a teacher or parent. The child then moves into stage two, which is characterized by a feeling that the right behavior is when one acts in his or her best interest. Following the preconventional level, a person moves into the second level, or conventional level. This level consists of stages three and four. The third stage is usually found in society and is characterized by a desire to do what others approve. Next, the person moves into the fourth stage where obeying the laws is deemed important. The third level, postconventional, is reached by some, but not all, adults. Stage five occurs when there is an understanding of social mutuality and concern for the welfare of others. The last stage is based on demands of individual conscience. According to Barger, Kohlberg deemed that a person must progress through these stages one at a time. Therefore, programs focusing on rules, punishment, and obedience are functioning on Kohlberg's second stage of the six stages of moral development.

Many programs rely on extrinsic rewards to encourage desired behaviors. Ryan and Bohlin (1999) warned that extrinsic rewards would not inspire children to make wise decisions and internalize values. What might occur when the rewards are removed and a child is faced with a decision outside of school? Ryan and Bohlin brought light to the fact that many teachers felt relieved of responsibility when a character education program was adopted. A math teacher might decide he or she no longer must incorporate character into his or her curriculum because the guidance teacher will take care of it. Indeed, it is necessary for all teachers to be aware that in order to experience success, the entire school must adopt, support, and implement the program.

Integrated Thematic Instruction

One program under consideration to meet the 11 principles put forth by the Character Education Partnership is the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines approach (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002). It is a component of the Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI), Model. Briefly, the ITI

Model can be traced back almost 30 years to the era of programs like Gifted and Talented, Mentally Gifted Minors, and other accelerated programs. The concept has evolved into a model that can be used in any school with any academic level of students. The ITI Model is a continually updated, research-based framework for applying current brain research and integrating the curriculum in order to ensure the mastery of skills and content (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002). Interaction is present between the biology of learning, instructional strategies, and conceptual curriculum. The ITI Model's two main goals are to create participating citizens and to assist teachers to put current brain research into practice (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002).

The ITI Model provides teachers with the ability to design their own curriculum around a year-long theme that makes learning real and meaningful to students. The curriculum encourages higher-order thinking skills as well as the integration of all areas to create opportunities for learning based on real-world experiences (Randle, 1997). An ITI Model classroom invites students to learn in a calm, safe, and inclusive environment (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002). The ITI Model focuses on its first goal, that of growing responsible citizens, through the use of LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002). The ITI Model is an approved, comprehensive reform model listed in the Catalog of School Reform Models that guarantees to increase students' achievement across gender and ethnic groups (Kovalik, 1994).

Kovalik's (1994) ITI Model is based on five principles derived from research on the brain. First, the model states that intelligence is a function of experience. The ITI Model uses Howard Gardner's definition of intelligence: "a problem-solving and/or product-producing capability" (as cited in Kovalik & Olsen, 2002, p. A3). According to Kovalik and Olsen, intelligence results from physiological changes in the brain occurring from sensory input, processing, organizing, and pruning. Genetics is not the absolute factor in determining intelligence.

Secondly, learning is an inseparable partnership between the body and the brain. Within this principal, the ITI Model explains that emotion is a gatekeeper to learning and performance.

As Kovalik and Olsen (1998) reported, the power of emotions is very strong in the learning process. Also, within this principle, it was stated that learning is enhanced through movement (Kovalik, 1994). Kovalik and Olsen (2002) agreed that learning is enhanced through movement because the centers of the brain responsible for movement help sequence thoughts.

The third principal is that each learner possesses eight multiple intelligences, or ways to solve problems. Some intelligences are stronger than others in each individual. Educators must make a conscious effort to incorporate as many multiple intelligences as possible into each lesson in order to reach their diverse learners. As explained by Kovalik and Olsen (2002), "This wide input and processing not only helps cement long-term memory but strengthens students' problem-solving and product producing capabilities in all areas of intelligence" (p. 3.9).

Kovalik (1994) explained that learning is a two-step process. First, children make meaning through pattern seeking. This meaning is not necessarily logical or organized. Second, learners must develop a mental program for using what they understand in order to transfer it into long-term memory. If the information is not transferred and is instead embedded into a mental program, the knowledge will be irretrievable and children will not be able to apply or use the knowledge (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002).

Kovalik and Olsen (2002) stated that the ITI Model concurred with the concept that a learner's personality will impact his or her learning and performance. A person is born with preferences that can influence how he or she receives information and organizes it. In turn, personality impacts how one makes decisions using knowledge and how one interacts with others. It is essential that educators take the time to get to know their students and determine how they best learn and take in new knowledge.

In addition to the five principles, the ITI Model is defined by nine brain compatible elements. The first element is to create an environment that is free from threat. If a student feels threatened, he or she will be unable to learn to his or her full potential (Kovalik, 1994). Randle (1997) stated, "Building trust in the classroom is the foundation for all learning and a first step in

developing productive citizens. To develop trust and reduce threat, teachers use six elements: procedures, agendas, group-building activities, lifelong guidelines, life skills, and consistency" (p. 86). Without trust and safety, a child is unable to place all of his or her focus on learning.

The curriculum also needs to focus on meaningful content (Kovalik, 1994). If the material is meaningful or real to the student, he or she is more likely to master and retain it. Kovalik and Olsen (2002) recommended starting with the state's curriculum concepts and connecting them to real-world experiences. Teachers must strive to keep the curriculum age appropriate. Teachers should base their planning on the students' prior experiences.

Third, every learner should be provided with choices (Kovalik, 1994). Kovalik and Olsen (2002) suggested, "Offering students choices--ones well crafted/selected by the teacher-- has enormous power to enhance learning" (p. 1.22). Choices provide students with the ability to select activities or input that they need in order to master the material and apply it to the real world. Teachers should develop several inquiries for the key points they are teaching. The inquiries should use the multiple intelligences, Bloom's taxonomy, and take personality preferences into account (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002).

Movement should be incorporated into lessons to enhance the students' learning. Kovalik and Olsen (2002) explained that movement is critical to all brain functions like memory, emotions, learning, and language. The authors related, "Movement is fundamental to the very existence of a brain. In fact, only an organism that moves from place to place even requires a brain" (p. 1.20). Teachers should make it a goal to enhance learning through movement. In addition to movement, all students should be provided with adequate time to complete assignments and master material (Kovalik, 1994). Students need time to grow, explore, think, act, reflect, and practice until mastery occurs. It is difficult to begin a task with complete focus and effort if it is obvious there is not adequate time to complete the task.

The sixth brain-compatible component of the ITI Model is that of creating an enriched learning environment (Kovalik, 1994). Curriculum should be developed that incorporates "being

there" experiences in the real world. Students should have opportunities to experience what they are learning and make connections to the world with their new knowledge. In order to create "being there" experiences, teachers should plan field-trip studies for students, fill their classrooms with resources, and invite guest speakers to share knowledge (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002).

Another element of the ITI Model is that collaboration takes place on a regular basis between teachers, students, and administrators. Kovalik and Olsen (2002) explained, "Collaboration is not just a bow to the social needs of students; it is a vital way of enhancing academic learning" (p. 1.18). The act of collaboration allows students to reflect and understand their own thoughts, while increasing their knowledge base. Students should have opportunities to teach each other and learn from each other.

Learners should be provided immediate and meaningful feedback. According to Kovalik and Olsen (2002), "The more immediate, intrinsic, and unambiguous the feedback, the faster and more accurate the learning" (p. 1.24).   If teachers wait too long to provide feedback, then a student has ample time to learn how to do something wrong or not learn the concept at all. The goal of the learner is to be able to master all material through applications (Kovalik, 1994). Kovalik and Olsen (2002) stated, "In the ITI Model, mastery means mastery at navigating through life, a higher goal than getting a high score on a multiple choice or true/false test" (p. 1.26). Prior to teaching a lesson, teachers must identify what they want students to understand and what they want students to do with that knowledge.

The ITI Model is an approach to designing and implementing curriculum in a manner that is consistent with current brain-research findings. The ideals and principles forming the foundation of the ITI Model are based on how the brain learns best. If students feel safe, have adequate time and choices, are taught meaningful content in an enriched environment that includes movement, collaboration, and immediate feedback, they are more likely to master the

material. After an extensive search, it was found that literature critiquing this model did not exist at the time.

<center>*LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines*</center>

One component used in the ITI Model to meet the goal of producing responsible citizens was the implementation of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002). The LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines are consistent with current brain research and are recommended as a starting point for teachers beginning the long journey to teaching using the ITI Model. Pearson (2000), creator of the Guidelines, observed, "The everyday application of the Lifelong Guidelines and LIFESKILLS school wide creates a powerful body brain-compatible learning environment" (p. V). Pearson also indicated the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines to be the component of the ITI Model that energized the remainder of the implementation process because teaching the skills created the earliest and most obvious changes in behavior.

The LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines are the social outcomes educators decide to set for students. They outline expectations for students' and teachers' behavior and performance at school and in the outside world. According to Pearson (2000), "These are basic codes for living in a trusting environment, one in which each person has the opportunity to develop and to flourish as an individual and as a contributing member of the larger community" (p. 1.2). Kovalik and Olsen (2002) pointed out, "They [LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines] form the foundation for positive, valued relationships and make learning joyous and powerful. They are also the keystone to good classroom leadership and, more than instructional strategy, help eliminate threat and enhance reflective thinking" (p. 9.1).

One goal for the program is that the five Lifelong Guidelines and 18 LIFESKILLS are internalized by students and used throughout the students' lives. As cited in Pearson (2000), Susan Kovalik, creator of the ITI Model, identified the purpose of the LIFESKILLS as a process "to guide students, individually and in groups, to an understanding of the personal and social

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behaviors that will enable them to do their personal best and thus enhance the likelihood that they will succeed in attaining their goals" (p. 1.3). The five Lifelong Guidelines contain principles for living. One of the guidelines is Personal Best. If a person is doing his or her personal best, then he or she is using all 18 LIFESKILLS.

The five Lifelong Guidelines were identified and defined by Pearson (2000) as:

1. trustworthiness--to act in a manner that makes one worthy of trust and confidence;

2. truthfulness--to act with personal responsibility and mental accountability;

3. active listening--to listen attentively and with intention to understand;

4. no put downs--to never use words, actions, and/or body language that degrade, humiliate, or dishonor others; and

5. personal best--to do one's best given the circumstances and available resources.

(p. 1.3)

The 18 LIFESKILLS were identified and defined by Pearson as:

1. caring--to feel and show concern for others;

2. common sense--to use good judgment;

3. cooperation--to work together toward a common goal or purpose;

4. courage--to act according to one's beliefs despite fear of adverse consequences;

5. curiosity--a desire to investigate and seek understanding of one's world;

6. effort--to do your best;

7. flexibility--to be willing to alter plans when necessary;

8. friendship--to make and keep a friend through mutual trust and caring;

9. initiative--to do something, of one's own free will, because it needs to be done;

10. integrity--to act according to a sense of what's right and wrong;

11. organization--to plan, arrange, and implement in an orderly way; to keep things orderly and ready to use;

12. patience--to wait calmly for someone or something;

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13. perseverance--to keep at it;

14. pride--satisfaction from doing one's personal best;

15. problem solving--to create solutions to difficult situations and everyday problems;

16. resourcefulness--to respond to challenges and opportunities in innovative and creative ways;

17. responsibility--to respond when appropriate; to be accountable for one's actions; and

18. sense of humor--to laugh and be playful without harming others. (p. 1.4)

Implementing LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines

Before a school can begin to implement any character education program, the entire school community must be prepared to live by the program's standards. The teachers, support staff, and administrators must practice what they preach (Ryan, 1995). If the staff is not able to set a good example, then the program will not be effective. Once a school or individual educator has decided to use the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines approach to teaching basic values and morals, there are several tips that Pearson (2000), creator of the program, suggested using.

Preparation

Prior to beginning instruction, an educator must take time to reflect and self-evaluate his or her feelings about the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. Teachers should start incorporating the skills and concepts on the first day of school. Teachers should search for real-world happenings to take advantage of teachable moments. Pearson (2000) explained, "The real power in teaching the Lifelong Guidelines and LIFESKILLS comes from making them part of daily living. This means using real-world happenings to capture the teachable moment rather than depending on an occasional, carefully prepared canned lesson" (p. 2.7). Pearson advocated incorporating LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines using an instructional approach.

Communication should exist between educators and parents concerning the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines.

Instructional Strategies

As a teacher implements the program, Pearson (2000) suggested several instructional strategies to aid with daily instruction. In her book, Pearson listed and explained several instructional strategies for teachers to employ: (a) modeling, (b) target talk, (c) processing the process, (d) literature, (e) songs, (f) journal writing, and (g) written procedures.

Modeling. Teachers should focus on consistent modeling of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. Pearson (2000) reminded, "As a teacher, you are one of the most powerful role models in the lives of your students" (p.3.2). It is crucial that teachers participate in self-evaluation and reflection to ensure they are modeling the behaviors they desire their students to internalize.

Target Talk. Pearson (2000) stated that the second instructional strategy teachers should incorporate into their daily instruction is the use of target talk She added, "Target talk provides an opportunity for your students to understand what the Lifelong Guidelines and LIFESKILLS look like, sound like, and feel like, and do not look, sound, or feel like, in varying situations" (p. 3.2). Target talk is an alternative to the "I statements" taught in educational courses. For example, "I like the way Johnny is sitting." This statement tells Johnny his goal is to please the teacher, not himself. If that statement was worded in a target talk approach it would be, "Johnny is using the Lifelong Guideline of Active Listening by sitting still, facing the speaker, and looking interested." The three steps are stating the child's name, listing the LIFESKILL or Lifelong Guideline being used, and explaining how the skill or guideline is being used. Target talk assists students in developing responsibility for their actions and behaviors (Pearson).

Processing the Process. As stated by Pearson (2000), the third strategy is processing the process. This simple but significant strategy provides students with an opportunity to analyze what they just did and more importantly, how they did it. Students can contemplate what they could have done differently to improve the process, what LIFESKILLS or Lifelong Guidelines they used or forgot to use, and what they learned. Processing the process does not have to be a concluding activity but can also be used prior to beginning an activity. Teachers can ask students what LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines they will need to use to accomplish the task at hand. Children can also describe what the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines will look like, feel like, and sound like when being used properly (Pearson).

Literature. The fourth strategy is something every teacher uses in instruction: literature. Teachers should make every effort to select books that are plentiful with LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines examples. In some stories the characters are using the skills and guidelines and in others they are lacking them. At the conclusion of the story, students should be given time to discuss the use or absence of LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines and how it affected the story and characters (Pearson, 2000). One book can serve three purposes: reading for enjoyment, teaching a unit concept, and reinforcing the importance of using LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines.

Songs. Pearson (2000) also recommended that educators use songs as an instructional strategy to teach LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. Songs are a great way to incorporate the musical intelligence; they also add the brain-compatible component of movement into the curriculum. Pearson explained, "They [songs] combine the power of memorable melody and the rhyme of poetry. Both significantly increase the likelihood that what is learned will be stored in the long-term memory" (p. 3.7). Students and teachers can create their own songs or use songs that have been produced and are sold through the ITI Model's resource websites.

Journal Writing. Pearson (2000) suggested that journal writing be incorporated when teaching the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. Journal writing offers students a chance to write honestly and openly about what they feel and think about a certain topic. Journal writing can be used to reinforce concepts or reflect on LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines' use. Pearson explained, "Journal writing is a useful medium in many ways since it provides opportunities for students to reflect, respond, react, and reply to a wide variety of ideas, comments, and stories" (p. 3.8).

Written Procedures. Pearson (2000) recommended using the instructional strategy of including written procedures in the classroom. Oftentimes, misbehavior occurs because the teacher has not made his or her expectations clear and the child does not know what behaviors are expected. According to Pearson, "Procedures help prevent confusion and misbehavior and also eliminate the need for stating expectations over and over again" (p. 3.9). Teachers and students can create procedures together and place them on a procedure flip chart to refer to when needed.

Summary

Within the last century, educators have gone back and forth on the decision of whether schools should teach morals or incorporate character education programs. The main goal of character education is to assist students in learning to make decisions based on a set of values they have internalized (Schaeffer, 2003). There are many character education programs from which schools can choose. This study focused on a program that is designed to teach children how to live as responsible citizens. The LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program is a component of Kovalik's (1994) Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI) Model. There are 18 LIFESKILLS and five Lifelong Guidelines. As opposed to teaching character education in isolated lessons or at a certain time of the day, the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines method

is integrated into every aspect of school life. The program is designed to create a school-wide common language as well as serve as a positive approach to behavior management. The desired outcome of the program is a caring community of responsible citizens (Kovalik).

According to Pearson (2000), the five Lifelong Guidelines and 18 LIFESKILLS contained in this program can shape the culture of a classroom. Through applications to real world experiences, an instructional approach to teaching, and daily discussions, the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines can be internalized and used throughout a student's life. Teachers can implement the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines through modeling, target talk, literature, songs, journaling, and written classroom procedures. LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines should be used from the first day of school to the last day of school. After an extensive search, it was found that literature critiquing this model did not exist at the time.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to evaluate the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents regarding the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program as implemented at a public elementary school in a small urban setting in East Tennessee. Chapter 3 describes the background of the researcher, how the research was conducted, the participants in the study, the instrumentation used, the method of data collection, the method of data analysis, and how the trustworthiness of the data was reliable.

Background of the Researcher

Because of the background of the researcher, biases exist. I began teaching at a school that had been implementing the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program for five years. The success of the program was evident at the school and the staff modeled the values being taught. When I moved to Tennessee, I brought the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guideline program to my classroom at the school explored in this case study. As the principal learned more about the program by visiting other schools that were implementing it, the program was adopted school wide. In addition, I helped coordinate the inservice and led a follow up inservice for the faculty. Therefore, the researcher has numerous biases regarding the success of the program.

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, I kept a detailed journal throughout the research process to keep any biases separate from the study. Additionally, all negative comments regarding the program were included in the presentation of the data.

Research Design

In a qualitative approach to research, the researcher often makes knowledge claims based on constructive perspectives, advocacy/participatory perspectives, or both (Creswell, 2003). A constructive perspective contains the multiple meanings of individual experiences with the meanings being socially and historically constructed with the goal of developing a pattern or theory. On the other hand, advocacy/participatory perspectives are political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change oriented (Creswell). In a qualitative study, the researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the goal of developing themes from the data.

A case study, a type of qualitative research, involves the researcher's exploring a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2003). The case or cases are bounded by activity and time. The researcher uses a wide variety of data collection procedures. When doing a case study on a program, data can include program documents, program reports and proposals, interviews with participants, interviews with staff, observations of the program, and program histories (Patton, 2002).

In order to gather data regarding the research questions, the researcher can collect data through observations and interviews. Patton (2002) recommended using purposeful sampling to select participants in case studies. According to Patton:

> Cases for study are selected because they are "information rich" and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest; sampling, then is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization from a sample to a population. (p. 40)

This case study examined a newly adopted program, LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines, in a public school located in a small urban town in East Tennessee. The setting was both information rich and illuminative, as recommended by Patton (2002). The school's enriched environment was welcoming and safe, as was the environment of other schools implementing LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. Also, the researcher was a teacher at the school, making access to the plethora of information easily available. The researcher was a participant in the setting. The researcher conducted open-ended interviews with teachers and

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students and open-ended surveys with parents. The researcher did not include program documents or program reports, as suggested by Patton, because they did not exist at the time of the study as the program was newly implemented. The study was conducted during the 2004-2005 school year. The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents regarding the value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program.

Participants

The participants of this study were selected from three multiage classes of kindergarten-, first-, and second-grade students. Twenty-five students and 25 parents were asked to participate. Twenty-three parents had children eligible for the interview process and the other two parents previously had students in multiage and currently had kindergarten students in the program. The kindergarten students were not included as they did not participate in the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program the year before. Purposeful sampling was used by selecting the three multiage classrooms. As a teacher of multiage, this researcher was aware that all three multiage classroom teachers fully implemented the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. The effects on students' behaviors were examined and this researcher wanted to be sure the students and parents involved were participants in a LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program that was fully implemented. In addition, 19 classroom teachers, 5 special area teachers, and 1 administrator were asked to participate in an interview. Parents of the first and second graders in the three multiage classrooms were given open-ended surveys to complete. Confidentiality was guaranteed and discussed through informed consent forms and an assent form for minors (see Appendices A, B, & C).

Successive Phases of the Case Study

The study was conducted during the first part of the second semester of the school year. This time period allowed ample opportunities for thorough data collection. The researcher began

by interviewing all consenting classroom teachers in the school, special area teachers, and the administrator in the selected elementary school to identify perceptions of the effects of the program as well as to garner their general feelings about the program. The next step was to conduct interviews with returning first- and second-grade multiage students. Purposeful sampling was used to select the students to interview. All of the students selected had at least one year's experience with the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. In addition, the parents of the children who were interviewed were asked to complete an open-ended survey on their perceptions and the effect the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines has had on their children's behavior. The parents' informed consent forms and surveys were sent home in their children's Wednesday Packet (see Appendix C). This packet went home with students' work, newsletters, and any forms that needed to be filled out and returned. The packets were returned every Thursday. A reminder was sent home the next week for parents who did not return the survey. Throughout the collection of data, analysis was conducted in order to identify themes and patterns. The final step was summarizing the findings, drawing conclusions, and making recommendations for the future.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation included an interview guide for interviewing teachers, a set of questions for the interviews of students, and an open-ended survey for parents. The interview guide for teachers consisted of a set of open-ended questions designed to reveal their feelings and perceptions of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program (See Appendix D). Students were interviewed with a different set of open-ended questions geared toward their age levels (see Appendix E). Additionally, an open ended survey was developed and pilot tested before being given to the multiage children's parents (see Appendix F). The researcher recorded whether the mother or the father completed the survey.

The instrumentation devices were subjected to a pilot test. Teachers, students, and parents were asked to provide feedback on the interview and survey questions. Two of the teachers who participated in the pilot test were not eligible to be interviewed because they did not teach at the school the previous school year; thus, they were not trained in implementing the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. The other three participants of the teachers' pilot test were a speech teacher, student teacher, and special education teacher who did not want to participate in the actual study. The students who participated in the pilot study were multiage students who were not eligible to be interviewed as well as former multiage classroom students. Finally, the parents who were asked to participate in the pilot test did not have children eligible to participate in the interview process. The researcher determined it was not necessary to adapt the interview and survey questions based on the information provided through the pilot testing.

Data Collection and Recording Modes

The data were collected through interviews and open-ended surveys. The researcher personally collected and analyzed all data. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The researcher did not include program documents or program reports, as suggested by Patton (2002), because they did not exist at the time of this study as the program was newly implemented.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data were analyzed continuously as they were being collected. Interviews and surveys were hand coded by the researcher to identify patterns and emerging themes. McMillan and Wergin (2002) stated that triangulation occurs when different sources of data, related to the same question, are used to verify results and findings. According to Patton (2002), there are four basic types of triangulation. First, there is data triangulation that occurs when a variety of sources of data are used in the study. Second, there is investigator triangulation, which is when

several different researchers or evaluators are used. Next, there is theory triangulation that

occurs when multiple perspectives are used to interpret one set of data. Finally, there is

methodological triangulation that occurs when multiple methods are used to research or study

one problem or program. Therefore, because of the variety of sources, interviews with teachers,

interviews with students, and surveys with parents, the data were triangulated using the data

triangulation method. The different sources from which the data were collected were used to

verify results and findings. The conclusions made were based on the combined general

perceptions of students, teachers, and parents.

Trustworthiness of the Data

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described trustworthiness as having four components:

credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility occurs when the

research is conducted in a manner that ensures the subject is accurately identified and described.

In this study, I ensured creditability through member checking. McMillan and Wergin (2002)

described member checking as giving notes to informants to ensure that their thoughts have been

recorded correctly. I submitted transcripts to the teachers interviewed as well as verbally reading

to students their answers to ensure they were recorded accurately. Transferability is when a

researcher can apply one set of findings to another context (Lincoln & Guba). I accomplished

transferability through triangulation. Dependability is based on the postpositivist assumption

that the social world is always being constructed making the concept of replication problematic

(Lincoln & Guba). Confirmability is the positivist concept of objectivity. Researchers must

make sure the findings of their study can be confirmed by another individual. I ensured

confirmability through member checking and peer debriefing. I selected an outside peer who

had no attachment to the research being conducted to participate in analytic sessions in order to

explore the research with me. I used an auditor to ensure trustworthiness of the data (see

Appendix G). In order to assist with objectivity, I kept a reflective journal throughout the research process to reflect upon my interviews and surveys.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents regarding the value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines, a character education program, that was implemented in 2003 at a public elementary school located in a small urban area in East Tennessee. The study involved collecting data through open-ended interviews with teachers and students and open-ended surveys with parents. The three sets of questions were pilot tested. Five teachers who were not interviewed, five students who did not meet interview requirements, and five parents who were not asked to complete a survey participated in the pilot testing. From the results of the pilot tests, there were no revisions made to the question sets. The pilot tests were not included in the study's results.

The parent and student participants of this study were selected from three multiage classes of kindergarten-, first-, and second-grade students. Twenty-five students and 25 parents were asked to participate. Purposeful sampling was used by selecting the three multiage classrooms. As a teacher of multiage, this researcher was aware that all three multiage classroom teachers fully implemented the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. Out of the 25 parents and 25 students who were asked to participate, 20 students were interviewed, and 19 parents completed surveys. In addition, 19 classroom teachers, 5 special area teachers, and 1 administrator were asked to participate in an interview. From that number, 18 classroom teachers, 4 special area teachers, and 1 administrator agreed to be interviewed.

Demographics

The participants included 20 students, 19 parents, 22 teachers, and 1 administrator. The students consisted of 11 boys and 9 girls. Eight of the students were first graders and 12 of the

students were in second grade. In order to ensure anonymity, each student was identified by a
number. Table 1 presents a summary of information about the student participants in this study.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Student Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Grade
Student 1	Female	First
Student 2	Male	Second
Student 3	Female	First
Student 4	Female	Second
Student 5	Female	First
Student 6	Male	Second
Student 7	Male	Second
Student 8	Female	Second
Student 9	Female	First
Student 10	Male	Second
Student 11	Male	Second
Student 12	Male	Second
Student 13	Male	Second
Student 14	Male	Second
Student 15	Male	Second
Student 16	Female	First
Student 17	Female	First
Student 18	Male	First
Student 19	Female	Second
Student 20	Male	First

Out of the 25 parents asked to participate, 19 completed surveys. Eighteen of the
participants were mothers and one participant was a father. In order to ensure anonymity, each
parent was identified using a letter of the alphabet.

The 22 teachers and 1 administrator interviewed ranged in teaching experience from 2
years to 31 years. Nineteen of the participants were female and four were male. In order to
ensure anonymity, each teacher was identified by a letter of the alphabet. Table 2 shows the
teachers' and administrator's demographic information.

Table 2

Demographic Information for Teacher Participants

Pseudonym	Years Teaching	Gender	Current Grade Level	Degree
Teacher A	18	Male	Administrator	Masters
Teacher B	5	Female	Fourth	Bachelors
Teacher C	27	Female	First	Masters
Teacher D	2	Female	K-1-2 Multiage	Masters
Teacher E	4	Female	Third	Bachelors
Teacher F	2	Female	Fourth	Bachelors
Teacher G	11	Female	Fifth	Masters
Teacher H	20	Female	Special Area	Masters
Teacher I	12	Female	Special Area	Bachelors
Teacher J	4	Female	Kindergarten	Bachelors
Teacher K	10	Male	Second	Masters
Teacher L	22	Female	Special Area	Masters
Teacher M	20	Female	Fourth	Masters
Teacher N	20	Female	First	Masters
Teacher O	31	Female	K-1-2 Multiage	Masters
Teacher P	6	Female	Kindergarten	Masters
Teacher Q	8	Male	Fifth	Masters
Teacher R	18	Female	Fourth	Masters
Teacher S	17	Female	Kindergarten	Bachelors
Teacher T	10	Female	Second	Masters
Teacher U	26	Male	Third	Bachelors
Teacher V	20	Female	Third	Masters
Teacher W	24	Female	Special Area	Masters

Each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form or child assent form, as appropriate, explaining the purpose and process of the study. With permission, the interviews were audio taped. Participants were assured that the tapes would be erased following transcription and that their names would not be used throughout the study. The interviewees were told they would have the opportunity to alter any answers as they were provided copies of the interview following transcription.

The teachers' interviews took place prior to the beginning of the school day, during planning periods, and after school. With the exception of four teachers who chose to come to my

room to be interviewed, the interviews were conducted in each teacher's classroom to add to the interviewee's comfort level. Each teacher was asked a set of eight open-ended questions. In addition, the interviewees had an opportunity to share any additional thoughts following the eight questions. All teachers were provided copies of the interview transcription and each had the opportunity to alter any answers.

Purposeful sampling was used to select the students to interview. All of the 20 students interviewed had at least one year's experience with the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. All but two of the interviews occurred during lunch in my classroom and in the hall outside of my classroom if there were other children in the room. All students had spent time in my classroom and appeared to be comfortable in the environment. Two students who attended after school care were interviewed after school. One interview occurred in my classroom and the other interview took place in an empty room near my classroom. Students were told they could choose to pass on any of the six questions if they did not want to answer it. Also, each student's interview transcription was read to him or her and he or she had the opportunity to amend any response.

The parents of the children who were interviewed, plus two additional sets of parents, were asked to complete an open-ended survey on their perceptions of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines and the effect the program has had on their children's behavior. The parents' informed consent forms and surveys were sent home in their children's Wednesday Packet (see Appendix C). This packet went home with students' work, newsletters, and any forms that needed to be filled out and returned. The packets were returned every Thursday. A reminder was sent home the following week for parents who did not return the survey.

All audio tapes were sent to a professional transcriptionist who typed the taped interviews verbatim. Following transcription, the tapes were listened to and the transcriptions were checked. Trustworthiness of the data was additionally ensured through the process of member checking.

Analysis of all interviews began immediately following the reception of the transcription. Notes were made to identify patterns and trends within the data. Interviews and surveys were hand coded by the researcher to identify emerging themes. The data provided vivid, descriptive themes that were used to answer the research questions central to this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions served as the focal point of the study:

1. What are the perceptions of students regarding the value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines character education program?

2. What are the perceptions of the teachers regarding the value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines character education program?

3. What are the perceptions of the parents regarding the value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines character education program?

The following themes emerged from the data analysis:

1. moral values,

2. strengths and weaknesses of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program,

3. effects of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program, and

4. improvements needed for the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program.

These themes emerged from the analysis of the data gathered from the teachers' interviews, students' interviews, and parents' surveys.

Moral Values

Prior to analyzing the perceptions of the effectiveness of a character education program, it is necessary to determine the participants' opinions of which moral values are important, what state our value system is in today, and what can be done to improve the values of children.   The moral value section is broken into three areas: students, teachers, and parents' perceptions.

The students' interview guide consisted of only one question about moral values. Because of the age of the participants, the question did not include the words "moral" or "values" but instead the children were asked what they thought it meant to be good. Coles (1997) discussed the definition of "moral intelligence" given to him by a pediatrician, "He did not respond with an elegantly precise definition. Rather, he told us about boys and girls he'd known and treated who had it – who were 'good'. . ." (p. 4). Coles went on to describe what makes a person good and how children obtain their values. Children grow up hearing the phrase, "be good," therefore, the students' question contained that familiar phrase.

The 20 student interviews yielded a variety of responses explaining what it means to be good. Children reported answers that ranged from not hitting others to cleaning their rooms or picking up trash. Student 9, a blond haired, soft spoken, first-grade girl, appeared frustrated as she replied, "My mom says something about being good and I can't remember." Student 18, a red headed, curious, first-grade boy, smiled as he summed being good up as, "Don't be bad or anything, that's how you just be good."

Despite the wide variety of answers, one common theme did emerge: being kind to other people. Over one half of the students, 13 out of 20, mentioned the importance of being nice to others, helping other people, using kind words, and being a good friend. For example, Student 17, a bright-eyed, enthusiastic first-grade girl, swayed back and forth on her knees as she explained how to be a good friend. She suggested:

> That [being good] means that you help friends to be good and don't be mean to others because it is not very nice to be mean. And, sometimes you feel sad because they [friends] won't play with you and being mean to you. And sometimes it's even worse, they might hurt you, they might hurt you really bad. They might do something really that hurts you. They might kick you and put you down because they don't want you to play with them right now. Some people don't understand what LIFESKILLS are.

In addition to Student 17, three other students mentioned using LIFESKILLS or specific LIFESKILLS in their responses. Student 11, a critically thinking, creative second-grade boy,

explained that being good means, "You have to use some LIFESKILLS like perseverance, flexible, effort, and personal best." Student 13, an athletic second-grade boy, agreed that to be good one must, "Use your personal best, active listening, and use effort." Finally, Student 8, a curly-haired, bright, second-grade girl, explained being good as:

> . . . to do your best, to use your LIFESKILLS everyday. And use every single one of them everyday. And, maybe every year you can make a project for the nursing home and give the old people treats because they really don't get anyone to see them much anymore.

It appeared that in the minds of the majority of first- and second-grade students who were interviewed that being good involved being nice to other people and being a good friend.

Teachers' Perceptions

The first question in each teacher's interview was, "What is your opinion of children's moral values today?" Eleven of the 23 participants stated that moral values of today's children have declined. Six teachers explained that they felt the moral values of today were the same as the moral values of the past. These six teachers ranged in years of teaching experience from 4 years to 26 years. Finally, six teachers did not compare the values of today to values of the past; however, they did express their perceptions of values and what could be done to improve the morals of children today.

Declined. Eleven of the 23 educators stated that moral values of today's children have declined. Included are some representative quotes from the group. Mr. A, principal of Happy Day Elementary, had been working in the field of education for 18 years. He had taught, coached, and served as an administrator at several school levels. He had recently left the area's high school to become an elementary school principal. This was his second year as leader of Happy Day Elementary. The interview was conducted in his office on a couch. Hanging on the walls were various pictures of Mr. A and famous basketball coaches. Mr. A did not sit behind

his desk, but instead sat on the other end of the couch. A nonthreatening environment was established. When asked about children's moral values today, Mr. A stated:

> They're just like society's moral values. I feel like, obviously, children's values have declined and the role that we play in school today is to try not only to educate them in academics, but in moral areas. You have a lot of kids that are exposed to so many more things in a lot more hours.

Another veteran teacher, Mrs. C, shared a similar opinion as Mr. A. Mrs. C had been teaching for 27 years. She had been at Happy Day Elementary since its opening in 1992. Mrs. C began her career in 1966 and took several years off to rear her children. She worked with first grade students at the time of the interview. As Mrs. C and I sat at students' desks in a colorful, inviting classroom, she explained:

> Well, I think moral values today are declining from what they have been in the past. I think the parents are not putting enough emphasis on the basic morals. I think they overlook so many things like cheating, copying off other people . . . I think it has really gone downhill. I started teaching back in 1966. I took off a lot of years with my kids and all, but I can see a big difference in parents and their roles with the children as compared to today.

Mrs. J had only been teaching for four years, but she too was worried about children's values today. While seated behind a student's work table designed for kindergarten students, she explained:

> I'm worried about it. Because they just don't seem to have the same teachings I had. The things that they are learning are really scary and just from hearing in the classroom the things that they feel are okay. It's just scary the way that it's going.

Mrs. V, a teacher for 20 years, had been teaching at Happy Day Elementary since it first opened its doors. This enthusiastic, energetic educator with a great sense of humor had spent many years teaching kindergarten but last year she began teaching third grade. Mrs. V commented, "My opinion is they have not been taught or have not witnessed values, appropriate values for this generation." Mrs. M had also been teaching for 20 years. She took some time off in her career to rear her two daughters but had been at Happy Day Elementary since it first opened. Her fourth-grade classroom was inviting with soft music playing in the background. Each table had

water bottles from which the students could drink. When asked about moral values, she answered:

> I guess, as far as moral values go, I feel like I've definitely seen a decline in the home input. I feel like I'm doing more parenting than I previously did. Just teaching right and wrong and those sorts of things instead of reading and math. I have definitely seen a decline over my time.

Stayed the Same. On the other hand, there were six teachers who commented that they did not believe values have changed over time. Mr. U, the teacher with the most experience out of the six who stated values have not changed, had been teaching for 26 years. He had spent the past five years teaching at Happy Day Elementary. He was a third-grade teacher in a classroom containing a pond, work bench, and a stage. His students were frequently heard complimenting his creativity and fun project ideas. When he was asked about moral values, he commented:

> In my lifetime, I'd say I see the same good children now as I saw when I first started teaching. And I see children the same as I remember them being when I was young as far as moral standards go.

On the other end of the experience spectrum, Mrs. E had only been teaching for four years and all of her experience had been at Happy Day Elementary.   She had been teaching third grade for the past two years. She had been a leader in modeling the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines implementation process. She gave a presentation about the program at an early childhood conference as well as presented information to Happy Day Elementary School's faculty. When asked how she felt about morals, she replied:

> I think that there are still many children who have great moral values today. And especially those who have them implemented by the LIFESKILLS and have had that taught in school as well as at home. And I think a lot of times we have a negative attitude about children with their moral values not being as they used to be. I still feel that children are basically children and it depends on their environment and what they have experienced.

Mr. Q was a fifth-grade teacher who was working on his Ed.D. with an administrative endorsement. He had been teaching for eight years. He began teaching at Happy Day Elementary, left and taught in another state, and subsequently returned to Happy Day

Elementary.   In Mr. Q's classroom, the Lifelong Guidelines were posted on the wall. Mr. Q answered this question in a similar manner as Mrs. E, stating:

I have been teaching for about eight years and I don't notice any difference as far as children from any previous year from beginning to end. I would have to say that the perception people probably say is it was worse that it was when they were kids, but I really don't believe that. I think it's just whatever time you're in. So I think, although there are places where we can definitely help children out, I feel like wherever a child starts is probably the same from generation to generation.

Mrs. N, a veteran teacher of 20 years, chose to answer the morals question based on her current first-grade class. She noted:

I believe they are morally very sound actually, the ones that I have experienced. I am probably surprised in some respects because I think our society has loosened, but this class seems to be very much on the conservative end.

Despite the discrepancies when comparing values of today to values of the past, all teachers agreed that parents, families, and home environments play a significant if not the most critical role in the development of moral values.

Mrs. D was a mother of two high-school students as well as being a second-year teacher. She taught one of the three kindergarten-, first-, and second-grade multiage classes used in this study. One bulletin board in her room was devoted to "Our Personal Best" work. She responded to the moral value question with the following:

I think in one respect they [morals] have not changed. I think they do reflect what their parents have taught them, which I think traditionally that's the case. However, I do think in recent years that parents' morals have changed. And just by example, children pick up what their parents are doing as opposed to what their parents are saying.

Mrs. T, a 10th-year teacher who had just obtained a second college degree and became fluent in Spanish, agreed with Mrs. D when she stated, "My opinion is that they [morals] directly reflect their parents' values. It goes hand in hand. You learn those from the parents."

Ways to Improve Values. Overall, the teachers agreed on the importance of the students' families in the development of their moral values. They also agreed that certain steps could be taken in order to improve the basic moral values in today's society. Several themes were noted

when teachers were asked how values could be improved. Many teachers stressed the importance of families; others stated that schools should play a role in improving values whereas some teachers acknowledged both parental and schools' efforts as being necessary to improve moral values in children today. The following were some representative quotes from the group.

Mrs. C, the veteran teacher of 27 years, sighed as she replied:

Well, I really don't think they [morals] are going to improve until we have parenting skills. I think there are too many parents who are having children who don't have any parenting skills and have no clue about what to do.

Mrs. C continued by discussing the importance of parenting skills and parenting classes:

I think there needs to be parenting skills. When I did the preschool program here, that was really one of my requirements as a teacher. I had to make home visits and I had a parent skill lesson every month with my parents. Of course if they didn't come, then I couldn't do it. It was pretty informative and we had a video that we watched and a book and they all got a book to take home. It just told them a lot of things about how they could deal with their children because a lot of them just didn't know what to do. It gave them words you say to your children, it gave them encouragement.

Mrs. J agreed that parenting skills were lacking by stating:

I think we have to start with the parents because right now I think we're seeing a generation of the children who had children. So they really didn't understand how to teach their children. My thoughts are we have to start with them to teach them. And then from there they can teach their children.

Mrs. N, who eagerly shared about the high morals of her class, stated she felt moral values start with the parents. She continued:

I think it all falls back on the home. I mean, it has to start there. We can try all we want during our seven and a half hours at school, but if it is not reinforced at home, we're wasting our time; not wasting our time, but it's not as effective.

Mr. K was an avid outdoorsman who just started his 10th year at Happy Day Elementary teaching second grade. As he finished eating his apple, he commented:

I think the burden of instilling values should fall mostly on the parents. And, I think schools should play a role in that also. But number one should be the parents. And gosh, it has got to be the parents. I think even with society as it is today, I think parents can protect them a lot of ways.

Six teachers, all who had earlier mentioned the importance of families on values, focused on ways the schools can help improve moral values in students today. Included were a few representative quotes from the group. Mrs. D, the second-year teacher, stated:

> I think that the biggest thing is a teacher setting an example for them [students]. Talking about the LIFESKILLS, I think that has helped. And because the vocabulary is in their brains they are able to use that vocabulary and know what they [LIFESKILLS] are.

Mrs. H, a special area teacher for 20 years, received national recognition for her outstanding teaching in 2004. She pointed out that while schools have an important role in teaching morals, they are also somewhat confined. She observed:

> We're teaching values education and things at school. I think a lot of it is that maybe they don't get it at church or they are not participating in church activities that are stressing absolute truths and characters and morals and those kinds of things. We have a hard time at school crossing the line of what we are allowed to teach and how we are allowed to express it.

Mrs. S had been teaching for 17 years. This was her second year teaching kindergarten at Happy Day Elementary. She suggested, "I think we need to teach values. When a child does something wrong, redirect and explain the values and the purpose, and have the children talk about what happened." Similar to Mrs. S, Mrs. I said that she was also comfortable with discussing morals in the school setting. Mrs. I was a special area teacher who had begun working at Happy Day Elementary the previous school year. Her classroom had painted ceiling tiles and murals on the wall. She acknowledged:

> I feel that teaching basic values within the school parameter is perfectly acceptable. I think that's a real good thing… You really don't have to tap into religion, even though I feel that's kind of the basis of it… You don't really have to touch on that but you're still teaching those core moral values. I think that's a good thing. I think, you know, with us as teachers being role models, just presenting ourselves in that way improves values. And you know just encouraging the children . . .

Later into the interview she added:

> . . . I'm very comfortable as a teacher. I don't think those two things should be separated. I think we need to take responsibility and know that we're not just teaching academics or certain disciplines, but that moral values need to be reflected here at school during the day.

Mrs. M had a long-term goal in that she wanted to help this generation to improve future generations. She explained her unique perspective:

> The greatest impact that I have is changing the next generation by teaching these children how to get along and treat each other as they should be treated. Hopefully, when they grow up to be adults that will be part of their family and children's lives.

Five teachers commented on the importance of both the schools and the families; one teacher even mentioned the necessity of collaboration between the school and parents. For example, Mrs. P, a nationally board-certified teacher, had been teaching for six years. She was teaching kindergarten and a college teachers' education course when she explained:

> Well, a lot of that [improving moral values] requires a partnership. I think a lot of people have the impression that public schools are not moral places and that moral values are not taught in classrooms and that is just totally wrong. For a lot of children that's the only place that they get instructional moral values and quality character traits. So I think that you have to work together with the parents who do that at home and support them and for the children who don't get that at home, you have to provide them with the basic structure of character development and moral development.

Mr. Q pointed out that there are several avenues one could take when teaching moral education. He added, "Whether you talk about values through church or through school, whether it is through life lessons at a Wal-Mart about how you treat someone else, there is always a chance to impose that wisdom, that learning to another child." Mr. A, the principal of Happy Day Elementary, took it one step further than just relying on homes and schools to improve morals. He proposed that it is society's job to assist in the enhancement of moral values. He noted:

> Well, there is a lot of things that can be done [to improve moral values], but the number one thing is families and the moral values that they teach them at home. And schools, we don't have full control of that, but at the same time we have to deal with it. So society as a whole has ownership in that [improving moral values] and it's going to have to be families, schools, churches, media, and all that in order for it to get better.

In conclusion, although teachers' opinions varied on the status of moral values today, they all agreed that families play a significant role in children's moral development. In addition, the teachers related that steps could be taken to improve moral values. Suggestions were made

that incorporated families, parents, schools, and societies working toward the goal of moral development in children.

Parents' Perceptions

The parents' survey consisted of two questions regarding moral values. The first question was, "What values do you feel are important for students to learn?" Because of the short, abbreviated nature of the responses to Question #1, all answers are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Parents' Perceptions of Important Values

Parent Name	Values that are Important for Students to Learn
Parent A	compassion, tolerance for others, patience, doing their best
Parent B	trust, truthfulness, no cheating
Parent C	honesty, courage, responsibility, kindness, cooperation, independence, sharing, flexibility, integrity
Parent D	truthfulness, honesty, friendship, tenacity, personal best, cooperation
Parent E	honesty, caring, respect, strong work ethic
Parent F	honesty, treating others as you would have them treat you, integrity, believing in yourself, respect
Parent G	cooperation, kindness, appreciation
Parent H	honesty, integrity, respect, compassion, self control
Parent I	honesty, personal best, no put downs, responsibility
Parent J	honesty, compassion, responsibility, effort, cooperation, humor, flexibility
Parent K	integrity, kindness, empathy
Parent L	honesty, trustworthiness, no put downs
Parent M	trustworthiness, no put downs, helpful
Parent N	honesty, trust, love and like people based on actions/heart
Parent O	trustworthiness, considerate, honesty, respect
Parent P	honesty, respect, patience, try your best
Parent Q	getting along with others, sharing, cooperation, synergy
Parent R	-
Parent S	sharing, caring, responsibility, perseverance, treating others with kindness

As shown in Table 3, all parents who responded to Question #1 listed at least one LIFESKILL or Lifelong Guideline. Two parents specifically used the term "personal best" and three parents used the Lifelong Guideline phrase "no put downs." Twelve of the 19 parents included honesty and/or truthfulness in their list of important values. Ten parents included a trait that involved compassion, friendship, caring, or kindness. Five parents mentioned respect, cooperation, trust, and doing your best. Four parents listed integrity as a value to be taught to children. Overall, the parents agreed that there are many values that are important to teach children.

The second question parents were asked to respond to was, "How do you think moral values should be taught to children?" Once again, many of the parents concurred on strategies to teach children values.

Eleven of the 19 parents included modeling values and teaching by example in their lists of ways to teach values. For example, Parent G explained, "I think moral values should be taught by example to children at a young age and throughout their lives. I think it helps to put yourself in a different situation and think how you would like to be treated."

Five parents mentioned the importance of role playing and incorporation of moral values into every activity within someone's daily life. Parent B suggested that morals be taught "by example." She added, "Since that is not always possible for a child at home, it's great that these are being taught at school. Values should be incorporated into every activity."

Four parents recorded that morals can be taught through discussions. Parent O, a mother of a second-grade student and a toddler, stated that morals should be taught "through the example of parents and examining the lives of 'role model' individuals, people who have become successful or have gained notoriety [sic] through their helping others."

Three mothers included the importance of stories and books when teaching values. In addition, three moms mentioned the presence of praise and one mom noted the power of prayer. Parent F taught her son morals through her religion. She noted:

Above all, teaching moral values to children begins at home with prayer and Bible reading. With teaching about God being taken out of schools, it is a much harder task to teach children morals. My son's teacher teaches morals in everyway, everyday. She incorporates it in every facet of teaching.

Strengths and Weaknesses of LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines Program

Because the purpose of this qualitative study was to evaluate the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents regarding the value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines, all groups were asked how they perceived the program. Through the responses gathered, the strengths and weaknesses of the program emerged. This section is broken into three areas: students, teachers, and parents' perceptions.

Students' Perceptions

Students were asked the question, "What do you think about the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines?" Out of 20 first- and second-grade students, 19 reported that they liked the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. Student 6 explained that he "sort of liked them and sort of don't." Through the students' brief answers, strengths concerning the program emerged from the answers as well as insight into how the students interpreted their parents' perceptions of the program.

Strengths. All 20 students stated that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines helped them in some way. On 10 occasions, a child alluded to the fact that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines had helped him or her to be a nicer person and be a better friend. Student 14, an energetic second-grade boy explained, "They have helped me to be good. They help me every single second."

Additionally, nine students stated the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines had helped them learn more at school. Student 2, a rule-following, second-grade boy, said, "I think they have helped me to be an active listener and pay more attention to the teachers because if you pay

attention to the teachers, you will learn more stuff." Other students noted that the program had improved their homework and grades.

Another pro of the program in the opinion of first and second graders was that the program is fun and helps you have a better life. When asked how the LIFESKILLS helped him, Student 11, an imaginative, second-grade boy, calmly stated, "I think they're great. If everybody tries to use them, that would be a great thing." Student 8, a second-grade girl, agreed with Student 11. She enthusiastically provided a first-hand account of how the LIFESKILLS made her life better, sharing:

> Before I even knew about the LIFESKILLS I had a good life, but it's not as good as when I knew the LIFESKILLS. Because now that I know it, my little sister doesn't yell at me a lot anymore and my brother is getting nicer to me everyday. I just think that whoever made them was a very good person. And, I wish everyone would, could, use them.

Finally, two students claimed that a strength of the program was that it helped other people understand what the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines are and why they are important. Student 17, a bright-eyed and eager first-grade girl, explained:

> I think they [LIFESKILLS] are good because it helps others to understand. And some people think they don't understand, but if you help them out, they will understand. And some people think that the LIFESKILLS are not true and they think they're fake, but it's not true.

Weaknesses. Overall, only two weaknesses were noted throughout the interviews; both were by one second-grade boy. Student 11 reported that although he liked the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines, sometimes they were hard to use and there were too many of them. He stated in a matter-of-fact manner:

> Sometimes I get over-active and I don't use them because I don't feel like I need them. Sometimes I know I need them, but I don't use them… Well, most of them are great and there are a whole lot of them. I can't name all of them. If I tried to name all of them, I would have to look at a piece of paper.

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Observations. Students were asked how they observed their parents thinking about the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. Fifteen students reported that in their opinion their parents liked the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines, four admitted they were not sure how their parents felt, and one student said his parents liked the program "so-so." Interestingly, Student 14, the student who reported his parents did not like the program very much, was the son of the only mother who listed a weakness about the program on the parents' surveys.

Student 8, the second-grade girl who revealed that her life has become better since the LIFESKILLS were implemented, explained that her parents "want every single kid in our family to use them [LIFESKILLS] and they think pretty much the same thing as me." Both Student 3 and Student 1 reported that their parents think it is important for grown-ups to use LIFESKILLS too. Student 1 responded, "They [my parents] think the LIFESKILLS are good. They think LIFESKILLS are very good for children and parents and adults." Her twin sister, Student 17, agreed that her parents liked the LIFESKILLS, saying, "They think that they're nice, that they help children learn how to be nice to other people."

Teachers' Perceptions

When teachers were asked about their perceptions of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program, 22 of the 23 interviewees responded that they thought it was a beneficial program for Happy Day Elementary. The one teacher, Mrs. J, who did not specifically state that she liked the program, explained what she thought was missing:

> This is just me, I feel like the heart of it isn't there. I mean we can come in and we can teach them all this, but we're not teaching them why. We can't bring up His name in class as to why they're learning it. So we can't say Jesus. We can teach them this, but the heart of it is Jesus.

The remainder of the teachers stated they thought the program was a good addition to Happy Day Elementary. Mrs. D, a multiage-teacher, revealed:

> I just know that even if I'm not at this school that uses them [LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines] overall that I would use them in my classroom. If I ended up in a different

school--even if they haven't heard of them--I would definitely use them in my classroom and share it with other teachers. And I know that's what happened at this school and I am convinced that it works and it is a positive thing. And it makes me happier to use that kind of terminology and language instead of something that's not as positive with the discipline. So I would carry it with me where ever I went.

Mrs. H, a nationally recognized teacher, shared the perspective of Mrs. D as she expounded:

In all my years of teaching I really think that the Lifelong Guidelines and LIFESKILLS program is one of the best programs I have ever worked with. I use it in physical education class regularly and frequently tie it into sportsmanship, cooperation, and who's responsible for what. Every discipline, I believe it, every discipline situation that comes up during the day can be tied to a LIFESKILL. And that you can, instead of emphasizing the behavior, you can go to the LIFESKILLS and the child themselves will realize the behavior that does not go if you are practicing that LIFESKILL… In 25 years, this is the best thing that I have ever done.

Through the teachers' comments, strengths and weaknesses of the program emerged. The teachers also stated their views as to how they considered parents and students had perceived the program.

Strengths. The teacher interviewees suggested there were several benefits to the implementation of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. The following pros emerged through data analysis: consistency and common language of a school-wide program, positive results from the use of sign language, effectiveness of the LIFESKILLS as a behavioral tool, Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI) Model compatibility, easy implementation, and correlation with state standards.

Twelve of the 23 educators interviewed mentioned the benefits of the consistency and/or common language of having this school-wide program implemented. The following were examples of representative quotes from the group of educators. Mrs. L, a guidance counselor and educator for 22 years, acknowledged:

It's the first program I have ever been involved in since I have been teaching that the whole school was involved. Not that other programs weren't good or could be good. It's just that everyone has to buy into it and everyone has to be doing it. The fact that our

principals supported and brought it to us and that everybody has worked together on it makes it successful

Mr. U agreed that the school-wide approach and consistency has helped Happy Day Elementary.

He explained:

> Because it [the program] did something for the school that has brought consistency throughout. I think that is a good thing. And as a matter of fact, I would like to see more of that not only with the LIFESKILLS but in all areas.

Mrs. V continued, "I think it is excellent. I think it needs to begin in kindergarten so that we have this basic vocabulary and basic expectations in school from day one." Mrs. G was an extroverted fifth-grade teacher known for her sense of humor and high expectations of using manners. She said the consistency of the vocabulary assisted students, explaining:

> They are able to incorporate the word into everyday activities. They understand the concept. They have the ability to incorporate the vocabulary and understanding and actually make sense of it. It's not these high words that they cannot grasp or understand.

In addition to consistency, teachers reported that the sign language that accompanies the program had been a positive addition. When teachers were first trained in implementing the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at Happy Day Elementary, they were given a list of sign language signals to accompany each LIFESKILL and Lifelong Guideline. On the school's morning news, selected students led the school in the Lifelong Guidelines pledge using the signs for each guideline. When interviewed, several teachers commented on the pledge and the sign language signals. Mrs. L, the guidance counselor, enthusiastically exclaimed:

> I love the sign language! I love not having to say it [LIFESKILL] every time, just being able to communicate non-verbally about it. I love it when another child uses the sign language, like a no put-down sign, instead of turning around and mouthing back at them or telling them to hush or that they're going to tell on them. In my own classroom I say it is a definite improvement and it's just less talking on my part. I don't feel like I have to do a mini lesson every time something happens. I can pull out, "You're not using the LIFESKILL of patience right," and it's over. I don't have to stand there 15 minutes talking about the incidence. I really like it.

Mrs. H, another special area teacher, concurred with Mrs. L, saying:

> I think my students are very responsive. They know that most of the time that we use signals in class. I can communicate that way. If I see something going on across the gym, I can catch that child's eye and I can give them the hand sign. The sign language

works all the way across the gym. I don't have to talk to that child; he or she knows what he or she did. They know what LIFESKILL that it [hand signal] is and goes along with. They know that they weren't being responsible. I think that the kids have been very responsive and they make the connection.

Additionally, five teachers reported that the program has supported their approach to handling discipline. The following were representative quotes from the educators. Mrs. I, a special area teacher, had been teaching for 12 years and in that time had developed her own set of personal classroom rules or procedures. When she first started at Happy Day Elementary in 2003, she began implementing the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. When she was asked about the results she saw following the implementation of the program, she stated:

> I think the main thing is that I was able to take my list of rules even from previous schools that I have been at and just kind of plug those in based on those guidelines. It just worked beautifully with my system of rules and just has given me a way to enforce my rules. So I think that's probably the biggest impact.

This year Mrs. R was Happy Day Elementary School's Teacher of the Year and graduated with a Masters' Degree with an administrative endorsement. Mrs. R served on committees at the central office and spent days serving as the school's principal when Mr. A was absent. As a fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. R was required to give conduct grades each nine weeks. Following the implementation of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines, Mrs. R reported that giving conduct grades had become less problematic. She noted:

> As an upper-grade teacher, I really like the fact that I can be very specific about a child's conduct grade, which we are required to put on the report card. I don't necessarily agree with that, but we have to put a grade A, B, C, D, or F. I use a tallying system that comes from my LIFESKILLS chart so that I can be very specific to a parent: "Here is why your child got a B." By using my sheets, it's clear-cut and I have much less of a number of complaints about conduct.

Happy Day Elementary was not an ITI school, but it did have many teachers who were familiar with the model and used several of the brain-compatible strategies listed under the ITI Model. Mrs. P was one of those teachers. Through her professional development, she learned much about the ITI Model and how it could impact a school. After implementing the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program for two years, Mrs. P concluded:

I think it fits very well into the ITI Model the more I've learned about that. I would like to know more about it, it's just so hard to get a good grasp on it without really seeing it in action and having enough time to really read through everything. I think the thing is seeing it in action would be easier. But, I think the LIFESKILLS are things that we do anyway, it's just put into an organized program.

Four teachers commented specifically about the numerous and simple ways that teachers could implement the program. For example, Mrs. E, an avid supporter of the program, exclaimed:

I love it [the program]! I have used it the past two years in my classroom. Each day I find other opportunities to incorporate it and I find other examples of the way my children have used it on their own. It is implemented in things that they do without me prompting or instructing. I feel like it is just a wonderful way to incorporate what you are already doing with the common vocabulary and it is something they can take with them as they travel through public school.

Teachers stated they were able to incorporate it across the board in nearly everything they did during the school day. Mrs. M detailed, "In just focusing on the five basic guidelines we can incorporate them into everything we do through out the day: academically, socially, morally, just everything." Mrs. R revealed that she once thought the 18 LIFESKILLS were too high of a number, but she has since changed her mind. She added, "At first I really wondered about the number of them [LIFESKILLS] and I thought there were too many, but as I used it, I found it's necessary because it really does cover just about any situation."

In conclusion, Mrs. H explained how she had used the program to help other educators meet one of the national physical education standards. She gave details saying:

I have done a workshop on applying Lifelong Guidelines and LIFESKILLS to physical education. I have only done this workshop one time in Birmingham, Alabama. I was absolutely stunned at the number of people who came to that workshop. It was well over 130 people, maybe 150. We have a standard, one of our national physical education standards, is teaching children personal and social responsibility. So, I planned this workshop about how we used the Lifelong Guidelines and LIFESKILLS in our physical education. I don't know whether it was because it addressed that standard that people were looking for it or if people are thirsty for something to do at their schools with a behavior/conduct character kind of program. I was just stunned at the attendance.

She went on to describe future plans pertaining to more workshops and explained:

I will enjoy doing that one again in two weeks and then I will be doing it in Chicago and the National Convention. The National Teachers of the Year, the group, each chose a standard and I chose that standard to address specifically because of the Lifelong Guidelines. So I will be bringing that with me."

Weaknesses. Mrs. R's reflections about the necessity of the large number of LIFESKILLS were not shared by all participants. In fact, the great number of LIFESKILLS topped the list of weaknesses concerning the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. Three teachers specifically commented that they thought one of the biggest drawbacks of the program was the large number of LIFESKILLS. For example, Mr. K explained his dilemma, saying:

> I think it's a pretty good program. I wish it was a little less complicated. I like the five core guidelines, but then I kind of get lost with the longer list [LIFESKILLS]. I think it ought to be condensed a little bit…If it was condensed by grade level, maybe that would help.

Mr. U added, "I think the negative part of the program is that it is probably too comprehensive."

Two teachers expressed disappointment with the integration of the program. Mr. Q, a fifth-grade teacher, stated, "I feel like it's harder sometimes to mesh our curriculum with it [LIFESKILLS], maybe I'm just not as creative as I need to be." Mrs. F, a second-year teacher had taught two different grades at Happy Day Elementary. While seated at a student's table with self portraits of her students hanging from the ceiling, she noted frustration with a lack of time to devote to LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines.

Finally, Mrs. O, a multiage-teacher with 31 years of teaching experience, brought a new situation to light by stating,

> I think they [the students] are very perceptive; I think that they realize that sometimes a particular child may not live by the LIFESKILLS. They sort of mimic them and not honestly believe them. That was said to me by one child and that was very perceptive of him and it bothered that child. He truly tries to model and use appropriate behavior.

Based on Mrs. O's statement, some students might know the LIFESKILLS, but may possibly choose not to use or apply them to their lives.

Observations.   During the course of the interviews, the teachers were asked how they had observed their students and their students' parents responding to the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. Fourteen teachers speculated that their students enjoyed the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines whereas nine teachers admitted they were unsure how their students perceived the program. The following are quotes that represent answers provided by the group.

Mrs. R, Teacher of the Year at Happy Day Elementary, claimed that her fourth-grade students enjoy using the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. Following the tsunami disaster in December 2004, her students proposed a plan to collect a coin for every person who died in the tsunamis. Mrs. R commented:

> I think they really like it [the program]. They use the words; they talk about them. You know in this whole change [tsunami] project we've been doing, the words have come up over and over because you can apply it to your situation.

Mrs. J's kindergarten students used the LIFESKILLS in a way closer to home. Mrs. J clarified:

> They really like it [program]. I can see them doing the active listening sign and the no put-down signs. I'll tell them when they are doing their work, "Alright this is your personal best." They like the sign language and they use that.

From a third-grade level perspective, Mrs. E agreed with Mrs. J, stating:

> I feel that the majority of my students enjoy the LIFESKILLS. I feel like some of them need a little bit more time spent on teaching those things. If they have had those LIFESKILLS and that implementation since kindergarten, they would enjoy it even more. It's the ones that have used the LIFESKILLS for the past two years and have really just taken it on as part of their everyday life and the way to do things who enjoy it. They don't ever complain about the sign language and they don't ever complain about the meetings or the agenda or when I ask them to make a choice instead of solving the problem for them. They love to do it, they enjoy being able to do that on their own.

The principal, Mr. A, said that he too felt students enjoy the LIFESKILLS. He pointed out:

> I think they like it [the program]. I think they understand it. I think a big key that they bought into it is because they hear it everyday from their home base teacher, to their special area teachers, to the administration, to parents, to cafeteria workers. When they hear those things, they take ownership in it. They see the LIFESKILLS visually posted in the rooms, they see it when we have programs, and different things in music, guidance, P.E., art, and everybody uses it. So, I think they understand the importance of it and how it not only can help them now as a child but as they get older.

Alternatively, a few teachers stated they had no idea how their students perceived the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. Mrs. T acknowledged, "The children don't talk about them directly. I've never heard them or an opinion from my students about what they are. So I really can't say what they think about them." Mrs. C also recalled that she had not heard many comments from her students regarding the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines.

In addition, 11 of the 23 educators observed that the parents seemed to like the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines whereas 12 stated they did not know how the parents perceived the program. Mr. A, who explained that he thought the students liked the program, also stated he thought the parents liked the program. He added, "I think parents are really sold on it too because it is easy to understand, it is easy to see results, it is easy for them to take the LIFESKILLS and use them at home in parenting skills." Mrs. P revealed she has had parents comment directly to her regarding the program. She acknowledged:

> I have had parents comment that they're glad that we're doing something in the whole school. It is nice that children in different classes are coming home and talking about trustworthiness and personal best. They like that consistency and they appreciate that we are doing that sort of thing.

Mrs. D and Mrs. F also reported having parents make comments concerning the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. Mrs. D explained:

> I got some feedback from parents, especially the kindergarten children when we first started school. The parents were surprised the children knew those big words and what they meant. I have had a couple of parents mention to me in parent conferences in the fall, "Gosh, we really like these LIFESKILLS and have started using those at home."

Mrs. F explained that she also had parents who said they used the LIFESKILLS at home. She clarified by stating:

> I had three parents who said, "I need a copy of those five Lifelong Guidelines because we are going to put those in our house. Those are our house rules." One parent kept coming back to me saying, "This is working so well between the brothers."

Fewer than half of the educators interviewed perceived that parents liked the program. On the other hand, the teachers did not express opinions of parents disliking the program. Instead, 12 educators admitted they did not know how the parents perceived the program. Mr. Q

guessed, "I want to say the parents are very much in the dark, but they are still learning about the program." Mrs. E agreed, saying:

> I feel like we need a little bit more parent education as far as LIFESKILLS go. We tried newsletters and teaching the kids who go home to teach the parents. But, sometimes I still get these puzzled looks or questions that if the parents understood or if they knew what was going on, they wouldn't write the notes or give me the funny looks. They would be aware of what we were teaching and how everything ties together. I feel like the parents who are very involved are very excited and very enthusiastic about how we use the LIFESKILLS and are implementing it at home and really following through with the vocabulary. They are trying to help their children learn the LIFESKILLS at an early age.

Mrs. E held that many parents were unaware of the program.

Parents' Perceptions

In order to determine the true perceptions of the parents, their answers were analyzed from the 19 returned parent surveys. Eighteen of the 19 parents responded positively when asked what their perceptions were regarding the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines being taught at Happy Day Elementary. There were an abundance of strengths concerning the program that emerged from the parent survey data and a few program weaknesses.

Strengths. The parents reported that the program's strengths were using common language, providing instruction appropriate for the grade level, complimenting their religious teachings, and building confidence in their children. The following parent comments supported the program's strengths.

Parent H, a mom of one of the students in multiage, said, "I think it [the program] takes some difficult concepts and brings them down to 'kid level' by using simple catch phrases and sign language signals." Parent E reported the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines were:

> . . . very positive because they go along with character traits and virtues we are teaching them as Christians. Many of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines go hand in hand with virtues we teach in our children's programs at church (honesty, friendship, cooperation, and others). I am very excited about their impact on my children.

Personally, I feel these skills are just as critical, if not more critical for children than academic areas. They are vital for a child to grow into an adult of character and integrity.

Another mother, parent A, explained, "The program teaches the students to be respectful of others and themselves and helps to build confidence in their lives."

Three mothers revealed that in their opinions moral education was as important, if not more important, than teaching academic subjects. For example, Parent N, a mom of a first grader, maintained, "ABCs and 123s isn't all there is. I'm so glad you teach LIFESKILLS. I hope they are indented in his [son's] brain and he does use them for a lifetime. These skills ARE just as important to me." Parent S agreed, saying, "I think it [the program] is a very good idea. Although academics are important, I feel that moral values are more important and can have a major impact on future generations."

Finally, Parent B, the mother of a kindergartener and a third-grade daughter summed up the program by explaining:

> It really sinks in. She can repeat all of the LIFESKILLS and more importantly she knows what they all mean. She and her friends talk about them when they are together. They have become part of their everyday conversations. They are part of their vocabulary and since they understand them, they are part of their behavior…I'm glad that these are being taught in school.

She continued in a very positive manner and then predicted:

> Unfortunately, there are parents who let the schools raise their children. If morals/values are not being taught, these children are missing the most basic skills needed for survival in the "real world." This program is truly something that can make the world a better place.

Weaknesses. Only 1 of the 19 parents expressed any dislike for the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. Parent O admitted she had concerns about the program, saying, "I think that no 'put downs' has been helpful, but 'personal best' has become a way out of trying harder. Overall, I think that some of the LIFESKILLS should be emphasized more and others less."

Teachers, parents, and students were all asked how the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines had impacted or affected behavior. From the responses, several patterns emerged. This section is divided into three areas: students, teachers, and parents' perceptions.

Students' Perceptions

As previously recorded, all 20 kindergarten-, first-, and second-grade students stated that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines had helped them in some way. On 10 occasions the students alluded to the fact that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines had helped them to be nicer persons and better friends. Additionally, nine students stated the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines had helped them learn more at school. Many first and second graders stated, in their opinions, they thought that the program was fun and helped them have a better life. Finally, two students claimed that a strength of the program was that it helped other people understand what the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines were and why they were important.

Additionally, students were asked where they used the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. All 20 students interviewed stated they used the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at school. Nineteen of the students reported they used the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at home. Two students replied they used them at church and two other students said they used them at stores. In addition, it was reported once during the course of the interviews that LIFESKILLS were used at the mall; with a dog; outside; at restaurants; in New York, Tennessee, and Atlanta; and on the football field. When Student 20 was asked where he used the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines, he energetically replied, "[I use them] everywhere . . . New York . . . Tennessee . . . Atlanta, here . . . at school . . . at home." Student 3 explained, "I use them at my house, with my dog, at school, and that's it." Student 2, an active, athletic, second grader, stated, "I use the LIFESKILLS in football because it is hard to line up at the line." Student 10 also included sports in his answer about how he used the LIFESKILLS, saying:

I think that if you use friendship, you can be friends with everybody. If you use resourcefulness, you can probably pretty much figure stuff out. If you don't know how to play kickball, then you can figure the rules out.

Student 6 agreed that LIFESKILLS could be used:

. . . in all sorts of ways. Like, by doing your best. You can use caring by helping other people when they get hurt. You can use friendship to help people with their work that they have. You can use your resourcefulness if you don't have enough money to buy an umbrella you can use a piece of paper to make a hat out of it.

Teachers' Perceptions

Teachers were asked questions that allowed them to express their opinions on the effectiveness of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. They were asked, "What results have you seen since the implementation of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program?" and "How have the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines affected behavior in your classroom and at school?" Based on these questions, 18 educators reported improved behavior, 2 reported no change in behavior, and 3 teachers reported they were unsure how behavior was affected.

Out of the 18 educators who related positive changes in the behavior of students following the implementation of the program, 9 reported one of the most visible effects on behavior was the children's use of the vocabulary in the program. Mrs. O, when asked about program results, replied, "I think the kids have a kinder, gentler attitude in general. Lot of times in conversation they use the vocabulary and LIFESKILLS. That's exciting and encouraging." Mrs. V agreed, "I think that behavior has improved because they are orally talking about these things [LIFESKILLS] and they are always on their minds, so definitely behavior has improved. I think the children are more aware of other people's feelings."

Mrs. W, a special-area teacher who worked with every student at Happy Day Elementary, also reported seeing her students use the vocabulary. She shared some of her observations, recalling:

Well, the children know when you say personal best, or when you mention the terms; they know the vocabulary. So I think that they [LIFESKILLS] are pretty good. I think the no put downs really help because I see children sometimes intervene before I even get to say anything. Or if I didn't catch it because I'm working with a group, another group will use a no put-down sign. I think children need to learn to encourage one another.

Mrs. D reported observing her kindergarten-, first-, and second-grade students using the vocabulary with each other. She expressed:

Well, for one thing, as long as I am talking about the vocabulary, I do feel my children using the words, *friendship*, *sense of humor*, or *flexibility*. Those are big words for kindergarten, first, and second graders. I do think they have been able to incorporate not only using the words, but also the actions that go behind them, and that's a big help.

Five teachers mentioned they have observed their students wanting to do better and taking more ownership of their behaviors. For example, Mrs. G reported:

Typically, I think the biggest thing that I notice is the children take more ownership in handling problems on their own. I think initially it starts out that they are eyeballing each other to correct everybody. But then they take ownership of solving problems.

Mrs. E had seen the same results as Mrs. G in her third-grade classroom, saying:

I guess my biggest strength or area of growth has been when the children just take so much upon themselves, as far as using the LIFESKILLS. Without me having to ask them to use them, they just do it on their own. They have an intrinsic motivation to do things without me saying it or prompting it or giving them help or advice. They want to do things on their own.

She continued by comparing her own actions both before and after implementation of the program and then related the positive changes she noticed:

Whereas before I had the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines vocabulary, they didn't do as much on their own initiative. It was me asking them to do things, me helping them solve their problems, and me solving them at times. Whereas now they are learning how to solve their problems and they want to make those choices.

Four teachers reported improved conduct grades and less time spent on managing behavior. Mrs. E, a fourth-year educator began by describing the behavior management system she used in her early years:

Well, I started out as a first-year teacher using the whole name on the board management system because that was what everybody did. Although, everything that I had learned in my early childhood classes had taught me that wasn't right. When I came to school, that was what everybody did and I thought, "I'm not going to be the crazy person out all alone

without any other structure or anything to go by." That's what I did and I hated it and had many behavior problems. The same students were penalized for unsuccessful behavior time and time again. I saw no results or progress in behavior, academic, just across the board.

She then began to speak of her students' behavior after the incorporation of LIFESKILLS and described a personal experience from the year before:

Now I honestly do not have any major behavior problems. The student that I had last year, while I was using LIFESKILLS in my classroom, would have been a student that would have definitely been a major behavior issue. Because of his experience in incorporating LIFESKILLS and because of the other children, things didn't happen that would have occurred had we not used the LIFESKILLS. Because the other students knew how to handle him, knew how to encourage him, he learned how to be successful and all of the LIFESKILLS and the terminology and the activities and the class meetings were the reason for that.

She concluded by giving an example of a student's improved behavior in her current class, saying:

This year I have a student who has some trouble with bullying. We have really used the LIFESKILLS to help her. That has really discouraged that problem from getting bigger and bigger . . . I don't feel like we have any behavior issues in my room. It is a system that works real well. It really eliminated a lot of the issues you would have without it.

Mrs. D also expressed positive effects on behavior in her classroom following the implementation of the program. She said:

Comparing the use of the LIFESKILLS and behavior plans in classrooms that I have been in, I think with LIFESKILLS I have spent a lot less time on behavior. It is almost like in the beginning of the year when you spend three to four weeks talking about the LIFESKILLS, that the children just accepted that's how we do things in our classroom. Not that it is perfect, but I do spend a lot less time talking to children about their behavior because they just know what is expected. I see other children reminding each other of the LIFESKILLS and using the terminology. I think it is a much more positive environment. Other behavior plans I've seen and personally used have been more negative about, "We don't do this, we're not doing that, or we're going to have time out." I think the positive approach of the program just affects the overall environment of the classroom.

Mrs. R also reported positive affects on behavior in her classroom. She was previously quoted for her use of the LIFESKILLS to give conduct grades in her classroom. She described the difference in the attitudes of her students, saying:

There is definitely an improvement in behavior. This past nine weeks, I only had two grades that were not A's in conduct and that's not typical. This is probably a better class than I've had, but I would probably never have that few of a number.   I think they just have taken a better attitude about wanting to get compliments instead of cautions and it has just worked for them.

Finally, one teacher, Mrs. B, explained how one of her students used the LIFESKILLS in one of her class projects. Mrs. B was a fourth-grade teacher who expressed her fear and dislike of being recorded on a tape recorder; nevertheless, she related the following experience from her classroom:

We did a kid's invention; it is a story we read in our reading series. One of my students, who has wonderful, great behavior, came up with a compliment game. You can go forward so many steps with each compliment and go backwards if you make a poor choice. It was an invention of a board game and it used the compliments and the LIFESKILLS.

Two teachers concluded there were not any changes in students' behavior following the implementation of the program. Mr. K admitted, "I haven't seen any changes; I don't know if I can quantify anything. I don't know if I've seen any night and day changes but I think they are more aware of the choices and their behavior in general."   Mrs. T agreed, saying, "I don't see an obvious change, or say, 'Oh, that's a LIFESKILLS behavior.'"

Three teachers remained ambivalent when asked if students' behavior had been affected by the LIFESKILLS program. For example, Mrs. N explained:

I don't know that it affected their behavior. I think it has helped as far as consequences and how we direct the child after the behavior has occurred. You know, I think that behavior might already be there but how we deal with it has been affected and how other children influence those children who have such a hard time dealing with social skills.

Parents' Perceptions

The parents' survey contained two questions regarding the effect the program has had on the students. The questions were, "How have the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines affected your child's behavior?" and "Does your child discuss the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at home? If so, what does your child say?" In response to the first question, 17 of the 19 parents

reported that the program has had a positive affect on their children's behavior, 1 parent reported some change, and 1 parent reported negative changes in behavior. In response to the second question, all 19 parents reported that their children discussed the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at home.

Of the 17 parents who commented that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines have positively affected their children's behavior, 4 stated they have helped their children to be better friends to others, 4 replied their children used the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at home, and 2 mothers said they felt their children have more confidence in themselves and are more independent. Parent K observed that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program "helps my son to be nicer to kids he doesn't like." Parent N, a mom of a first grader, agreed that the LIFESKILLS have helped her son be a better friend to others by "treating people how you like to be treated."

Parents also reported their children use the LIFESKILLS at home as well as during the school day. Parent S, the mother of a second grader, stated, "My daughter talks about them and tries her best to incorporate them at home and with others." Parent B agreed, saying, "She [my daughter] applies them to situations that arise at home. If her sister says something 'not nice' she will almost instantaneously announce, 'THAT WAS A PUT DOWN!'" Parent H's children not only used the vocabulary at home but the sign language as well. She proudly described her observations, saying, "They often use the hand signals and terminology when they spot an infraction at home or sometimes on a TV show or elsewhere. They have learned to try their best to be their best."

Two moms reported that the program has given their children a feeling of confidence and independence. Parent C, mother of a soft-spoken, shy first grader, explained, "She is shy but knows now she can use courage to speak politely. This LIFESKILLS lesson and Guideline has encouraged her." Parent A commented her son is now, "more open to compromise, has a lot more confidence in doing things on his own, and does not talk negatively about others."

Although one mother agreed the program has improved behavior at school, she admitted that it did not carry over to home life. Parent D explained her perspective, saying, "I see a change at school but not necessarily at home . . . He seems to leave them [LIFESKILLS] at school most of the time. He has spent all of his goodness!"

On the other end of the spectrum, another mother said she feels her son used the LIFESKILLS to excuse his behavior. Parent O, the mother of a second-grade boy, explained this interesting phenomenon, saying, "He does tend to use the words, 'Well, it is my personal best,' as though he can say that after a half-hearted effort and that personal best makes it right."

All 19 parents reported that their children discuss the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at home. Parent S, relayed, "Just the other day my daughter was upset because she left her homework at school. She said, 'Mrs. D is going to think that I am not responsible if I tell her I can't find it.'" Parent C's daughter also spoke of LIFESKILLS at home. Parent C gave details, relating, "My daughter has said, 'Mommy, I used courage to ride my bike, responsibility by getting my backpack, and kindness on the playground.'" Parent C continued, "I use the LIFESKILLS lingo in discipline and parenting at home. It's a great life lasting skill. The grandparents have been impressed that a first grader can know the importance of courage, integrity, et cetera." Along the same line as Parent S and Parent C, Parent A reported that her son "talks about doing his personal best and how others make him feel good by using no put downs and friendship." Parent F reported similar findings as Parent A. She observed, "My son speaks more of no put downs and doing his personal best! He categorizes behavior and names a LIFESKILL for such behavior."

Two parents reported that their children have high expectations for themselves and their families and used the LIFESKILLS to describe behaviors. When asked if his child discussed LIFESKILLS at home, Parent M, the only father who completed a survey, replied, "My son has explained them to us and helps us to enforce them on him as well as asking us to follow them."

Parent J was the mother of three sons and one daughter. Her three sons attended Happy Day

Elementary at the same time. To this question, she replied:

> I hear them discuss the LIFESKILLS with each other and I do believe they try to follow
> them as they are able to. One child often tells me how he got in trouble and uses the
> Lifelong Guidelines language to describe what he did wrong. Another child comments
> about how sometimes people talk about the LIFESKILLS more than they use them! But,
> this is learning about life too!

Improvements Needed for the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines Program

As with any program, there is always room for improvement. The LIFESKILLS and

Lifelong Guidelines program did not appear to be exempt from needing improvements. Teachers

and parents were asked about ways to improve the program at Happy Day Elementary. Because

of the students' young age, they were not asked any questions dealing with improvements to the

program. Therefore, this section is divided into two sections: teachers' perceptions and parents'

perceptions concerning areas needing improvement in the program.

Teachers' Perceptions

When teachers were asked what could be done to improve the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong

Guidelines program, several patterns emerged. For example, eight educators said they felt that

Happy Day Elementary needs to continue to work to ensure the program is consistently used

school wide. Eight of the 23 educators interviewed stated that Happy Day Elementary School's

teachers would benefit from additional staff development. Five teachers emphasized the

importance of working together with parents and educating them about the LIFESKILLS and

Lifelong Guidelines program. Finally, three teachers expressed concerns about the number of

LIFESKILLS in the program. Mrs. E, a teacher who openly supported the adoption of

LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines, gave several suggestions, including:

> I think there needs to be a lot more consistency; that would improve the program
> tremendously. I love what I do in my room, but it is hard to not be able to bounce ideas
> off of other teachers, students, faculty, and administration when they are not using the

system as I am. I think it's a wonderful program because with LIFESKILLS, you can modify, you can accommodate however you need to--but, I think that there needs to be more consistency as far as actually implementing it because when I am walking down the hall, it would be wonderful to look at another child that's not in my classroom and show them a LIFESKILLS sign and have them respond and never have to say a word. Things like that, I think, would make it a stronger program. It would allow the students when they come to you to know what to expect and allow students when they leave, to follow through with what they've learned. They have worked hard and I feel like they move on and they are not doing any of the same fundamentals or teachings of the system or any kind of follow through. I feel like that is kind or cheating them.

Mrs. R expressed concerns about the lack of consistency of implementing the program at Happy Day Elementary. She shared:

I would probably like to see it better used in the cafeteria because I still think it's not. I think as time has gone on because it's perhaps not emphasized consistently, it starts to fall apart. I know all of the classrooms are not using it, so therefore, when you team with other people to do things you don't have that consistency. I like the program itself but I wish it was used more consistently within the school if it really was going to make a difference.

Staff Development. Eight of the 23 educators interviewed stated Happy Day Elementary School's teachers would benefit from additional staff development. Answers ranged from the need for day-long workshops, to quick refreshers at faculty meetings, to making time to observe other educators using the program. The following quotes were representative of the responses given by the group. Mrs. H stated she observed a need for regular refresher courses, explaining:

I think that we need a refresher. Like I said, we need a refresher every year. Even if it is just a couple of hours to share a couple of ideas, or if any other schools are doing it, we could combine together. We have a high turnover of teachers and we need to make sure those teachers are consistently trained. Even if it is one of our staff members that helps them out and gets them started. We need to maintain our consistency and our enthusiasm and keep it in the forefront vocabulary-wise. I think it's probably slipping off in the cafeteria. Those people were not in on the training, so they don't get the whole picture.

Mrs. P stated she would benefit from staff development that involved observations. She explained her own desire to observe the use of the program with younger children:

If we had some way to observe other teachers who are using it or have video tapes of people that are using it--I would like to see how they do it with younger children. I think kindergarteners have such a hard time. They are so egocentric that it is hard for them to

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place themselves outside of their selves. Maybe that would be a component of how you do it in an early childhood setting.

Home Connections. From the 23 educators interviewed, 5 expressed interest in making connections with parents in order to improve the effectiveness of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. Mrs. L revealed:

I think that is our biggest weakness. I think if we had to pick anything how to make this program even better, it's going to be parent involvement, whether that means we ask students to bring something home to do with their families or having a PTA program that uses the LIFESKILLS.

Mrs. C stated she hoped the home-school coordinator would involve parents. She acknowledged:

I think it would be good for our home-school coordinator to plan, at the beginning of the year, some kind of informative thing for the parents. Somebody could present the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. I think we should do more communicating with the parents about what we are trying to do and what we are trying to get across and what we are trying to teach. I'm not sure that all of the parents understand.

Mrs. I also expressed her desire to get parents involved. She pointed out, "I think we should get the parents on board even more by pushing the program, getting more literature home, and even giving parents some ways that they could implement those things at home."

Number of LIFESKILLS. Finally, three teachers revealed their opinions that the program could be improved if the number of LIFESKILLS were reduced. For example, Mr. K deemed, "I think it ought to be condensed a little bit. If it was condensed by grade level, maybe that would help."

Parents' Perceptions

Along with the teachers, the parents were also asked to respond to a survey question about ways to improve the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. Seven of the 19

parents skipped the question or responded that no improvements were needed. Five parents noted the need for more communication regarding the program. Parent C asked that a list be sent home that she could hang on the wall in her house. She explained it was good for parents to learn the LIFESKILLS too. Parent L agreed that it would be beneficial to get the parents to use the LIFESKILLS at home. She explained that her family has a compliment box at home to compliment family members when LIFESKILLS are used.

Parent M, the father of a second-grade boy, requested that the school offer a training session for both parents and children in order to learn more about the LIFESKILLS. Parent N went a step farther and mentioned involving the entire community. She suggested the need to "have diverse people in the community come and talk with the kids about an experience they've had that included a LIFESKILL."

Finally, one mother, parent I, expressed her concern that there were too many LIFESKILLS. She noted, "I think there are too many, not that they aren't all important. Maybe it could focus better on a reduced number. Also, for young kids, some of the words are too long, like *trustworthiness*."

Overall, teachers, parents, and students have a positive perception of the effectiveness of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. The interviews and surveys revealed a variety of program strengths as well as a few program weaknesses. Teachers, parents, and students reported numerous effects occurring following implementation of the program. Lastly, several recommendations were conveyed revealing ways to improve the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Introduction

Through a review of associated literature, interviews with 23 educators and 20 first- and second-grade students, analysis of 19 parents' surveys, and five years of experience as a teacher using the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made concerning the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents regarding the effectiveness of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program implemented at Happy Day Elementary. All information that was gathered through the process of one-on-one in-depth interviews and distribution of surveys was organized and analyzed in an attempt to determine how Happy Day Elementary School's students, teachers, and parents perceived the newly implemented LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program.

It was important for administrators and teachers to know if the time and energy they set aside for LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines was truly improving the behavior and decision-making abilities of students. If the program proved to have no impact or a negative impact on students and their behavior, educators would need to reevaluate the program. Therefore, it became essential to assess and evaluate the influence the current program has on the members of Happy Day Elementary School's community of learners.

All teachers at Happy Day Elementary School had been implementing the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines; however, implementation was occurring at various degrees. Teachers held differing perceptions of the effectiveness of the program and what needed to be accomplished to improve the value of the program. Additionally, parents and students needed a formal opportunity to express their opinions of the strengths and weaknesses of the program. An abundance of information was gained through the interview and survey process regarding the perceptions of the effectiveness of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines process.

Conclusions From the Study

The conclusions drawn from the study focused on the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents concerning the effectiveness of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. The conclusions were determined through an indepth analysis based on the information gathered through the transcription of each teacher's interview, the transcription of each student's interview, the data received from each parent's survey, the review of literature, and the coding and analysis of the different forms of data. The detailed findings were centered on the four central themes that emerged through data analysis:

1. moral values,

2. strengths and weaknesses of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program,

3. effects of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program, and

4. improvements needed for the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program.

All information that was accrued during the data collection process was used to outline a list of recommendations. For each of the four emerging themes, findings were explained, relevant professional literature was recognized, and recommendations were made.

Outside of the four themes that emerged, it was interesting to note that the Lifelong Guideline of Active Listening was not discussed or mentioned by students, teachers, and parents as often as the remaining four Guidelines. Possible explanations could be that Active Listening is more internal making it difficult to observe, or, perhaps the lack of Active Listening is easier to overlook than the lack of Truthfulness. It would be interesting to determine, through additional research, why that particular Lifelong Guideline was not as prevalent in the data gathered.

Findings

Students reported that "being good" involved being nice to other people, helping other people, using kind words, and being a good friend. Whether it was helping a friend with homework, caring for a hurt friend, or playing nicely with a sibling, most students' answers focused on relationships with other human beings.

Teachers' opinions varied on the status of moral values today. Some teachers stated moral values had declined whereas others explained they felt moral values had not changed throughout the years. However, all teachers mentioned the importance of parents and families on the development and maintenance of moral values. All teachers gave suggestions for ways to improve moral values in children today.

Parents reported that they valued the importance of many of the same morals. Topping the list was honesty and truthfulness, followed closely by the virtues of kindness and caring. The importance of respect, cooperation, trust, doing your best, and integrity also appeared on numerous surveys. All parents listed at least one LIFESKILL or Lifelong Guideline in their register of moral values they desired their children to learn. Parents also agreed that morals needed to be taught through modeling, role playing, discussions, and links to stories and literature.

Connection to Literature

One of the most important roles parents and educators play in a child's life is through their influence over the development of moral values. As Martin Luther King Jr. stated, "Intelligence plus character--that is the goal of true education" (as cited in Singh, 2001, p. 49). In fact, as reported by Romanowski (2003), a Gallup Poll indicated that over 90% of people surveyed agreed that schools should teach basic values. Because of an overwhelming consensus that moral values need to be improved, especially after the recent history of violence in schools,

many schools are adopting character education programs (Kagan, 2001). These character education programs strive to instill the basic values that provide students tools to treat others with respect, honesty, and courtesy (Schaeffer, 2003).

Recommendations

It is recommended that parents and teachers work together to determine the moral values to be taught in the school's curriculum. Additionally, parents and teachers need to collaborate to determine the most appropriate manner to best teach and instill those identified moral values in students. Then, teachers and parents should come to a consensus if they think the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program is the right choice for Happy Day Elementary to use as a platform in which to embed these values in a child's moral thinking for life. A detailed plan is described in the Recommendations for Practice section located at the end of this chapter.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines Program

Findings

All students stated that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines helped them in some way. All but one student noted that the program was well liked and enjoyed. Half of the children interviewed alluded to the fact that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines had helped them to be nicer persons and better friends. Nine students stated the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines have helped them learn more at school. An additional strength of the program, in the opinion of first and second graders, was that the program was fun and helped them have a better life. The only program weaknesses noted were that there were a large number of LIFESKILLS to remember and sometimes it was hard to apply the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines.

All but one educator interviewed reported that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program was a beneficial addition to Happy Day Elementary School's curriculum. The strengths

of the program included but were not limited to: consistency and common language of a school-wide program, positive results from the use of sign language, effectiveness of the LIFESKILLS as a behavioral tool, ITI Model compatibility, easy implementation, and correlation with state standards. Teachers reported that the weaknesses of the program were the large number of LIFESKILLS in the program, difficulties in integrating the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines in the curriculum, and the ability of students to mimic the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines by talking the talk but opting not to walk the walk.

Additionally, all but one parent surveyed reported positive perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. The parents reported that the program's strengths were using common language, providing instruction appropriate for the grade level, complimenting their religious teachings, and building confidence in their children. The only concern expressed about the program's weakness was that the Lifelong Guideline of "Personal Best" allowed children a way out of working hard.

Connection to Literature

There is strength in a program when the program is implemented in school culture, both in and out of the classroom, and at home (Zarra, 2000). As opposed to teaching character education in isolated lessons or at a certain times of the day, the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines method is integrated into every aspect of school life. The program is designed to create a school-wide common language as well as to serve as a positive approach to behavior management (Kovalik, 1994). Teachers should remember that at first it might seem awkward to use the school-wide vocabulary, but after it is integrated, the students will become more familiar with the concepts (Singh, 2001). According to Pearson (2000), "The everyday application of the Lifelong Guidelines and LIFESKILLS school wide creates a powerful body brain-compatible learning environment" (p. V).

Despite the positive approach and common language of many character education programs, research has indicated that many times students can explain the difference between right and wrong but still choose not to live by those values (Romanowski, 2003). Finally, teachers must support the core values that the school's staff members decide to teach. If there is not consensus for a certain value, it needs to be removed (DeRoche, 2000).

Recommendations

Based on the consensus of positive perceptions by teachers, parents, and students, the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program should continue to be implemented at Happy Day Elementary. Once again, teachers and parents must work together to determine what moral values need to be included in the school's curriculum. Students should be provided opportunities to share aspects of the program they enjoy and identify aspects they wish to change. Overall, the program must be continually evaluated and adapted as needed with input from all involved parties. A detailed plan is described in the Recommendations for Practice section located at the end of this chapter.

Effects of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines Program

Findings

Every student interviewed reported that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines had helped them in some way. Half of the students alluded to the fact that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines had helped them to be nicer persons and better friends. Students stated the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines have helped them learn more at school. Many first and second graders stated, in their opinion, they thought the program was fun and helped them have a better life. All 20 students interviewed stated they used the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at school. Nineteen of the students reported they used the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong

Guidelines at home. Other locations where children mentioned using LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines included: churches, restaurants, the mall, outdoors, and on a football field.

Eighteen educators reported that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines had improved behavior of students in their school, two teachers reported seeing no change in behavior, and three teachers reported they were unsure how behavior was affected. Nine teachers reported one of the most visible affects on behavior was the children's frequent use of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines vocabulary. Teachers mentioned they had observed their students wanting to do better and taking more ownership of their behaviors. Additionally, teachers reported an improvement in conduct grades and that they spent less time on managing behavior. Finally, teachers noted the students were applying the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines' concepts to everyday life. As reported, two teachers concluded there were not any changes in students' behavior following the implementation of the program and three teachers remained ambivalent when asked if students' behavior had been affected by the program.

Parents' responded in a similar manner when asked about the effects of the program. Seventeen of the 19 parents reported that the program has had a positive effect on their children's behavior, one parent reported some change in behavior, and one parent reported negative changes in behavior. Of the 17 parents who commented that the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines have positively affected their children's behavior, 4 stated they have helped their children be better friends to others, 4 replied their children used the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at home, and 2 mothers said they felt their children have more confidence in themselves and are more independent. One mom reported the program had improved her son's behavior at school, but it did not carry over to his home life. Alternately, one mother reported feeling that her son used the LIFESKILLS to excuse poor behavior. Finally, all parents reported that their children discuss the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at home.

Connection to Literature

Berkowitz (1998) described character education programs as interventions that promote the creation of moral functioning. The purpose and desired effects of character education are educating students to understand, care about, and act using the virtues of respect, truthfulness, caring, and responsibility (Schaeffer, 2003). Ideally, students will learn how to make decisions based on these internalized values. Ryan and Bohlin (1999) agreed that the purpose of character education is to inspire students to do well in academics and extracurricular activities, all the while internalizing the good habits they use. Power et al. (1989) considered that stimulated development of moral judgment is not merely a temporary effect of learning to say the right thing, but has a lasting effect that can be used to solve problems in life's situations outside of the classroom.

The specific purpose of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program is "to guide students, individually and in groups, to an understanding of the personal and social behaviors that will enable them to do their personal best and thus enhance the likelihood that they will succeed in attaining their goals" (Pearson, 2000, p. 1.3).

Recommendations

Because of the overwhelming percentage of teachers, parents, and students who reported positive results and effects from the implementation of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines, the program should continue to be included as part of Happy Day Elementary School's curriculum. However, additional efforts should be made to strengthen the home-school connection. A detailed plan is described in the Recommendations for Practice section located at the end of this chapter.

Findings

  The LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program was not exempt from requiring improvements. For example, eight educators reported Happy Day Elementary needs to continue to work to ensure the program is being consistently used school wide. Educators interviewed stated Happy Day Elementary School's program would benefit from teachers receiving additional staff development on the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. Teachers emphasized the importance of working together with parents and educating them about the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. Finally, three teachers expressed concerns about the number of LIFESKILLS.

  Seven of the 19 parents did not list any necessary improvements or reported that no improvements were needed. Parents expressed interest in learning more about the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines and requested more communication regarding the program. Finally, one mother expressed concern that there were too many LIFESKILLS and indicated this could be confusing for a young child.

Connection to Literature

  Prior to a school's implementation of a character education program, the entire school community including teachers, certified staff, administrators, and parents must be prepared to model the standards they are trying to teach the students (Ryan, 1995). If a school's community members choose not to model the desired character traits, then the program will have less effect in instilling morals than a school that models virtues but does not have an adopted program (Berkowitz, 1998). Zarra (2000) explained that in order to achieve success, the program must be implemented in the school's culture, existing in and out of the classroom, as well as being connected to home. Parents must be aware of the program and involved in order to make maximum connections and truly reach the students. The traits should be promoted and used in all

aspects of school and home life. Additionally, Schaeffer (2003) noted the Character Education Partnership's recommendation that all staff members be provided with ongoing support and high-quality professional development opportunities.

Recommendations

Based on the data from interviews, surveys, and review of literature, Happy Day Elementary should form a LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines committee to devise a strategic plan to improve the program deemed effective by teachers, parents, and students. Additional teacher staff development days should be planned, parent information sessions should be designed, and a support system should be established to encourage teachers to make an extra effort to further integrate the program and become comfortable with the large number of LIFESKILLS.

Recommendations for Practice

1. The implementation of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program at Happy Day Elementary should be continued. The majority of students, teachers, and parents reported they enjoyed the program and have experienced some form of success in using it.

2. Teachers should attend additional staff development sessions on how to effectively and appropriately implement the program. A Susan Kovalik Associate, one who is an expert on the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program, should be asked to visit Happy Day Elementary and provide a refresher workshop and offer suggestions to the faculty. At each faculty meeting a short amount of time should be set aside for teachers to share success stories and effective ways to implement the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines.

3. Additional efforts should be made to send the program home with students. Informative parent sessions should be offered two to three times a year. Happy Day Elementary should include a parent workshop when the Susan Kovalik Associate visits. The administrator or a teacher representative should attend these sessions in order to be aware of parents' concerns and needs. An informative packet detailing each LIFESKILL and Lifelong Guideline should be provided to parents at the beginning of each school year. Extra copies should be available in the office and each parent information session. Finally, traveling LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines take-home bags should be created to send home with each kindergarten student. Each LIFESKILLS bag should contain story books about a particular LIFESKILL and a parent/child activity to complete at home.

4. A LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines committee should be created. All stakeholders should be represented including administrators, classroom teachers, special area teachers, certified staff, parents, and students. The committee's purpose would be to hold meetings to evaluate the success of the program and identify areas needing improvement. The committee would be in charge of gathering data to determine if the program is impacting the school community in a positive manner. Some items that should be considered are changes in the number of behavior referrals, truancy rates, and suspensions. Additional, the committee should administer a brief, annual survey gathering information concerning effectiveness of the program from students, teachers, and parents.

Summary

In all my years of teaching I really think that the Lifelong Guidelines and LIFESKILLS program is one of the best programs I have ever worked with. I use it in physical education class regularly and frequently tie it into sportsmanship, cooperation, and who's responsible for what. Every discipline, I believe it, every discipline situation that comes up during the day can be tied to a LIFESKILL. And that you can, instead of emphasizing

the behavior you can go to the LIFESKILLS and the children themselves will realize the behavior that does not go if you are practicing that LIFESKILL. In 25 years, this is the best thing that I have ever done (Mrs. H).

The LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program is one of many character education programs available for schools to use today. It is an approach to character education that is integrated into every aspect of school life. The desired outcome of the program is to create a caring community of responsible citizens (Kovalik, 1994). The LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines are consistent with current brain research (Pearson, 2000).

As Student 8 proposed, "Well, I just think that whoever made them [the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines] was a very good person. And, I wish everyone would, could, use them." Parent A agreed, "I think ALL schools should implement the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program."

Students' perceptions of the program were expressed in a positive manner. Students found the program to be helpful, fun, and important. Students reported being better friends, using kind words with others, and doing better in school following the introduction of the program.

The teachers at Happy Day Elementary expressed perceptions of satisfaction with the effectiveness of the program. Students' behavior was reported to have improved as well as an improvement in social interactions. Teachers commented on the benefits of using a school-wide common language with accompanying sign language. Teachers explained the program could be improved through additional staff development opportunities, increased consistency of use, and an improved effort to involve parents in making home connections.

Parents expressed their positive perceptions of the effectiveness of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. They reported improvements in their children's behavior and social interactions. Additionally, they revealed that their children discuss the different LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at home. Mirroring the teachers, they desired more information regarding the program.

In summary, the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program is perceived as an effective program by the students, teachers, and parents involved in the study at Happy Day Elementary School.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Assent Form: Minors

Children's Assent Form

I want to see how you feel about the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. I would like to ask you a few questions about them. If it is okay with you, I will record what you say with a tape recorder. Your name will not be used in my paper. If there is a question you don't want to answer, you can choose to pass. If this is okay with you, please sign your name below.

_____
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT/DATE

_____
SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR/DATE

_____
SIGNATURE OF WITNESS/DATE

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form: Teachers

East Tennessee State University
Veterans Affairs Medical Center
Teacher Informed Consent for a Research Project

Page 1 of 3

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jessica Anderson

TITLE OF PROJECT: *The Perceptions of Students, Teachers, and Parents*
                           Regarding the Value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong
                           Guidelines Program

This Informed Consent will explain about being a research subject in an experiment. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research study is to determine the perceptions of teachers, parents, and students regarding the value of the LIFESKILL and Lifelong Guidelines character education program currently being implemented at X Elementary School. The study will involve interviews with teachers and students, as well as open ended parent surveys. The results will be used to determine the overall perceptions of the value of the LIFESKILL and Lifelong Guidelines program.

DURATION: Each teacher interview should be completed in one hour or less. The interviews will be audio taped, with participant's permission, for transcribing purposes. All audio tapes will be erased following transcription. Each participant will be provided verbatim transcripts of the interview and asked to correct or revise any of the information.

PROCEDURES: The study will include interviewing teachers concerning the perceptions of the values of the new LIFESKILL and Lifelong Guidelines program currently being implemented at X Elementary School. These interviews will be audio recorded with permission; however, participants will have the option to decline taping the interview. Some of the questions may cause slight discomfort and the participants may choose not to answer those types of questions.

Ver. 08/22/2004

Subject's Initials (_____)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jessica Anderson

TITLE OF PROJECT: *The Perceptions of Students, Teachers, and Parents*
                            Regarding the Value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong
                            Guidelines Program

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: There are no known possible risks and/or discomforts of your involvement in the study. You may choose not to answer any question(s) that makes you feel uncomfortable.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS and/or COMPENSATION: The potential benefits as a result of this study include an opportunity to voice your opinion regarding the LIFESKILL and Lifelong Guidelines program. There are no other direct benefits to the individual subjects and there will be no compensation paid to any subjects.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS: If you have any questions or problems you may call Jessica Anderson at XXX-xxx-xxxx, or Dr. Nancy Dishner at XXX- xxx-xxxx. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at XXX-xxx-xxxx for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject.

 CONFIDENTIALITY: Every attempt will be made to see that the study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in my home office for at least 10 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, and research related personnel from the ETSU Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis have access to the study records. My records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: The nature of the demands, risks, and benefits of the project has been explained to me as well as are known and available. I understand what my participation involves. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to ask questions and withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. I have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A signed copy has been given to me.

My study record will be maintained in strictest confidence according to current legal requirements and will not be revealed unless required by law or as noted above.

Ver. 08/22/2004

Subject's Initials (_____)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jessica Anderson

TITLE OF PROJECT: *The Perceptions of Students, Teachers, and Parents Regarding the Value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines Program*

Please sign as a volunteer willing to participate in an interview.

_____

SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER / DATE

_____

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR / DATE

Ver. 08/22/2004

Subject's Initials (_____)

Informed Consent Form: Parents

East Tennessee State University
Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Parent Informed Consent for a Research Project

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jessica Anderson

TITLE OF PROJECT: *The Perceptions of Students, Teachers, and Parents Regarding the Value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines Program*

This Informed Consent form will explain about being a research subject in a study. It is important that you read this carefully and then decide if you and your child wish to participate.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research study is to determine the perceptions and feelings of teachers, parents, and students regarding the value of the LIFESKILL and Lifelong Guidelines character education program being used at X Elementary School. The study will involve interviews with teachers and students, as well as, open ended parent surveys. The results will be used to determine the overall perceptions of the value of the LIFESKILL and Lifelong Guidelines program.

DURATION: Each parent survey should take about 15 minutes to complete. Each student interview will last between 10 – 15 minutes. The interviews will be during a non-instructional time of the school day. The interviews will be audio taped, with participant's permission, for transcribing purposes. All audio tapes will be erased following transcription. Each student will be read the answers given during the interview and asked to correct or revise any of the information.

PROCEDURES: The study will include talking with students and surveying parents about the perceptions and feelings of the new LIFESKILL and Lifelong Guidelines program being used at X Elementary School. These interviews will be audio recorded with permission; however, participants will have the option not to be taped during the interview. Some of the questions may cause slight discomfort. You may choose to not answer those types of questions.

Ver. 08/22/2004

Subject's Initials (_____)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jessica Anderson

TITLE OF PROJECT: *The Perceptions of Students, Teachers, and Parents Regarding the Value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines Program*

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: There are no known possible risks and/or discomforts of your involvement in the study. You may choose not to answer any question(s) that makes you feel uncomfortable.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS and/or COMPENSATION: The possible benefit of this study is a chance to voice your opinion about the LIFESKILL and Lifelong Guidelines program. There are no other direct benefits and there will be no compensation paid.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS: If you have any questions or problems you may call Jessica Anderson at XXX-xxx-xxxx or Dr. Nancy Dishner at XXX-xxx-xxxx. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at XXX-xxx-xxxx for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject.

 CONFIDENTIALITY: Every effort will be made to see that the study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in my home office for at least 10 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you or your child. Although your rights and privacy will be kept, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, and research related individuals from the ETSU Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis have access to the study records. My records will be kept confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: The nature of the demands, risks, and benefits of the study has been explained to me, are known, and available. I understand what my participation and the participation of my child involves. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to participate and giving my child permission to participate. My child will be given an assent form to sign. Also, I understand that I am free to ask questions and quit the study at any time, without penalty. I have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A signed copy has been given to me.

My study record will be maintained in confidence according to current legal requirements and will not be revealed unless required by law or as noted above.

Ver. 08/22/2004

Subject's Initials (_____)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jessica Anderson

TITLE OF PROJECT: *The Perceptions of Students, Teachers, and Parents Regarding the Value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines Program*

Please sign as a volunteer to complete the parent survey and as a parent/guardian for your child to participate in an interview. Your child will also be signing an assent form. A copy is attached.

_____

SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER / DATE

_____

SIGNATURE OF PARENTS OR GUARDIAN/DATE

_____

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR/DATE

Ver. 08/22/2004

Subject's Initials (_____)

Dear Parents,

X Elementary School began implementing the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program last year. In order to determine if the program is accomplishing the desired goals, follow up assessments must be conducted.

I am currently working on my doctorate degree. One requirement is to write a dissertation. I am completing research to determine the perceptions of parents, students, and teachers concerning the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program. Attached is an informed consent form and a child assent form asking permission to interview your child on his or her perceptions of the effectiveness of the program. In addition, I would like for you to complete a parental survey. Please sign where indicated on the attached form if you are willing to participate and allow your child to participate.

I appreciate your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Jessica Anderson

K-1-2 Teacher

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

1.   NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
         Jessica Anderson

2.   PROJECT TITLE
         The Perceptions of Students, Teachers, and Parents Regarding the Value of the
         LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines Program

3.   PLACE
         This study will be conducted at X Elementary School located in X, Tennessee.

4.   OBJECTIVES
         The objectives of this study are to determine the perceptions of students, parents, and
         teachers regarding the value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines character
         education program.

5.   SUMMARY
         There are a wide variety of character education programs for schools to choose from.
         This study will focus on a program that is designed to teach children how to live as
         responsible citizens. The LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program is a component
         of Susan Kovalik's ITI, Integrated Thematic Instruction, Model (Kovalik, 1994). There
         are 18 LIFESKILLS and five Lifelong Guidelines. As opposed to teaching character
         education in isolated lessons or at a certain time of the day, the LIFESKILLS and
         Lifelong Guidelines method is integrated into every aspect of school life. The program is
         designed to create a school-wide common language, as well as, serve as a positive
         approach to behavior management. The desired outcome of the program is a caring
         community of responsible citizens (Kovalik, 1994).
         It is important for administrators and teachers at the school where the research is being
         conducted to know if the time and energy they set aside for LIFESKILLS and Lifelong
         Guidelines is truly improving students' behavior and decision making abilities. If the
         program is proven to have no impact, or a negative impact, on behavior, educators will
         need to reevaluate the program. It is essential to assess and evaluate the influence the
         current program has over student behavior. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative
         case study is to evaluate the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents regarding the
         value of a character education program which was implemented in 2003 at a public
         elementary school located in a small urban area in East Tennessee.

6.   METHODS OF RECRUITMENT
         Patton (2002) recommended using purposeful sampling to select participants in case
         studies. "Cases for study are selected because they are "information rich" and
         illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest;
         sampling, then is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization
         from a sample to a population" (Patton, 2002, p. 40). Therefore, purposeful sampling

will be used to select the participants of this study will be selected from three multiage classes of K-1-2. Thirty students and 32 sets of parents will be asked to participate. The kindergarteners will not be included, as they did not participate in the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program last year. As a teacher of multiage, this researcher is aware that all three multiage classroom teachers fully implemented the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. Affects on students' behaviors is being examined, and this researcher wants to be sure the students and parents involved were participants in a LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program being fully implemented. In addition, all classroom teachers, special area teachers, and administrators will be interviewed. Parents of the first and second graders in multiage will be given open ended surveys to complete. Confidentiality will be guaranteed and discussed through an informed consent form. Participants will be recruited in a variety of ways. Teachers will receive a letter asking if they would be willing to participate in a short interview at their convenience. Parents of selected classrooms will be sent an optional survey with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study. Finally, parents will receive a letter asking their permission for their child to participate in an optional interview during a nonacademic time of the day.

7. RESEARCH DATA

The research data will be kept confidential. Teachers will be asked if their interviews can be recorded with audio devices for transcription purposes. The teacher interviews will range from 30 – 45 minutes in duration. In addition, parents will be asked permission for their children's interviews to be recorded for transcription purposes. The student interviews will last approximately 10 – 20 minutes. The parent surveys will not have any designated codes linking the subject to the data. However, to ensure that any identifiable information is protected, the researcher will erase tape recordings once they are transcribed, as well as, lock any paper information in a file cabinet located at the researcher's home. There will not be any names written on any of the transcriptions or completed surveys.

The instrumentation devices will be put through a pilot test. Teachers and parents will be asked to provide feedback on the interview and survey questions. The researcher will adapt the interview and survey questions as needed based on the information provided through the pilot testing.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described trustworthiness as having four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility occurs when the research is conducted in a manner that ensures the subject is accurately identified and described (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I am going to ensure creditability through member checking. McMillan and Wergin (2002) described member checking as giving notes to informants to ensure that their thoughts have been recorded correctly. I will submit transcripts to the teachers interviewed, as well as verbally reading students their answers to ensure they were recorded accurately. Transferability is when a researcher can apply one set of findings to another context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I will accomplish transferability through triangulation. Dependability is based on the post-positivist assumption that the social world is always being constructed making the concept of replication problematic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability is the positivist concept

of objectivity. Researchers must make sure the findings of their study can be confirmed by another individual. I will ensure confirmability through member checking and peer debriefing. I will select a peer in the field of education and participate in analytic sessions in order to explore the research together. I will use an auditor, approved by the dissertation committee, to ensure trustworthiness of the data. In order to assist with objectivity, I will keep a reflective journal throughout the research process. I will reflect upon my interviews and surveys.

8. SPECIFIC ROLE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS
    The teachers will be asked to respond verbally to eight open ended questions, and other questions that may emerge as a result of discussions in the interviews. The questions relate to the perceptions and observations the teachers have made regarding the LIFESKILL and Lifelong Guidelines program. Parents will be asked to complete an optional open-ended survey which consists of six questions. Finally, the children participating will be asked seven open ended questions regarding what they think about the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program, and other questions that may emerge as a result of discussions in the interviews.

9. SPECIFIC RISKS TO SUBJECTS
    There are no known risks associated with this research.

10. BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS
    The subjects will have the opportunity to voice opinions concerning a newly implemented program at X Elementary.

11. INDUCEMENTS
    No incentives are being offered.

12. SUBJECT CONFIDENTIALITY
    Each subject/participant's right to privacy will be maintained. The research information will be available for inspection by study related personnel and the ETSU IRB. All information about the subject/participant's will be treated confidentially and will not be revealed, except as noted above, unless required by law.

13. INFORMED CONSENT
    The Informed Consent is attached. All participants will be given the Informed Consent, have any questions answered by the principal investigator or other knowledgeable, qualified designee(s), and receive a copy of their signed Informed Consent Document (ICD), unless the requirement for signed IC has been waived by the IRB. When appropriate, the participant will be required to document their agreement to participate by signing the ICD in order to participate in the project.

14. ADVERSE REACTIONS REPORTING
    Any unanticipated event. All adverse events (AE) must be reported (for local events) verbally to the IRB within 24 hours of its occurrence and in writing to the IRB

(1) for local events – no later than five working days from the date of the event, and
(2) for off-site events – no later than five working days from the
date the PI is notified of the occurrence.

15.   PERTINENT LITERATURE
        Interview Guide   Attached
        References   Attached

16.   LOCATION OF RECORDS
        The records will be stored in a locking filing cabinet located at the researcher's home.

APPENDIX D

Interview Guide for Teachers

1. What is your opinion of children's moral values today?

2. What do you think can be done to improve the basic values in children today?

3. What are your perceptions about the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program?

4. What results have you seen from the implementation of the program?

5. What do your students think about the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines?

6. How do you think the parents perceive the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines?

7. How have the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines affected behavior in your classroom and at school?

8. What can be done to improve the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines?

9. What else would you like to share with me?

APPENDIX E

Interview Guide for Students

1. What do you think it means to be 'good'?

2. What do you think about the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines?

3. How do you use the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines?

4. Where do you use the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines?

5. How do you think the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines have affected or made a difference for you?

6. What do your parents think about the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines?

7. What else would you like to share with me?

APPENDIX F

Parents' Open-Ended Survey Questions

1. What values do you feel are important for students to learn?

2. How do you think moral values should be taught to children?

3. What are your perceptions regarding the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines being taught?

4. How have the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines affected your child's behavior?

5. Does your child discuss the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines at home? If so, what does your child say?

6. What do you think could be done to improve the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program?

7. Any additional comments…

APPENDIX G

Letter From Auditor

Richard Bales, Secondary Supervisor
Johnson City Schools
100 East Maple Ave
Johnson City, TN 37601

February 4, 2005

Jessica Calais Anderson
P.O. Box 61
Mountain Home, TN 37684

Dear Mrs. Anderson:

It is my pleasure to write this letter on your behalf. I would like to take this opportunity to commend you on your work you have completed in your research project, "The Perceptions of Students, Teachers, and Parents Regarding the Value of the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines Program". Upon examination of your materials, and meeting you for a complete and comprehensive guided tour of your experience with this research study, I conclude that your work is complete, valid, verifiable, and reliable. I am convinced this study was conducted in an ethical and thorough manner.

As an auditor, I investigated your adherence to the standards required of qualitative research methods. I traced your interviews you conducted with each participant through a review of your transcriptions and audio tapes. Your review of literature was thorough and pertinent to your research topic.

Your research questions were clear and provided focal points to the study. Your findings were organized and were organized by categories which followed the natural progression of a qualitative research study. Your research design employed the constant comparative method of data analysis which allowed you the flexibility to alter your research direction as needed.

Your perspective as a classroom teacher using the LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines gave you a deeper insight into your selected topic. You correctly balanced that perspective with peer debriefing and member checking to ensure triangulation to lessen the chance of bias. The time and care you enlisted to help ensure trustworthiness was evident while paying attention to truth-value, consistency, and neutrality.

It has been my privilege to have had the opportunity to be associated with your highly professional and organized research study. I commend you for your extensive efforts in completing this important and relevant project.

Sincerely,

Richard Bales
Secondary Supervisor

VITA

JESSICA ANDERSON

Personal Data:	Date of Birth: January 10, 1978
	Place of Birth: Nashville, Tennessee
	Marital Status: Married

Education: University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN
Arts and Sciences, Psychology, B.S.
2000

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN
Inclusive Early Childhood Education, M.S.
2001

East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed. D.;
2005

Professional
Teaching
Experience: Fort Craig School of Dynamic Learning, B-1-2 Teacher
Maryville, Tennessee
2001 – 2002

Woodland Elementary School, K-1-2 Teacher
Johnson City, Tennessee
2003 - Present