STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' SOCIALIZATION BELIEFS ABOUT SHY/WITHDRAWN STUDENTS: PRESCHOOL-GRADE 2

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to explore students’ and teachers’ perceptions regarding students’ social skills, based on perceptions of peer acceptance. The population consisted of three Kindergarten students, six first grade students, nine second grade students, and five teachers. The students were asked questions about their perceived social competence, using the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children (Harter & Pike, 1984). The results of the students’ answers on the scales were coupled with teacher interview questions, and teacher perceptions of the student in the classroom. It was concluded that students who were identified by their teachers as shy or withdrawn, perceived themselves as having very few friends. Students gave low scores for the peer acceptance category, as well as alluding to their lack of peer acceptance and friendships through their facial expressions and verbally. Teachers believe that teaching is an ever-changing process, which requires them to be flexible. They also believe that group work promotes socialization in the classroom. Teachers perceive that students are less interactive than peers because they are shy or withdrawn. Some teachers believe that parent involvement has an effect on the social skills of the students identified. Finally, it was found that the students’ and the teachers’ perceptions aligned closely, especially in the category of peer acceptance.
This work is dedicated to all the professors and instructors that have helped me become who I am today. If it weren’t for my undergraduate professors and graduate professors at BGSU, I wouldn’t be where I am today.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Throughout observations and field experiences while a student at Bowling Green State University I have had the chance to observe and teach in a variety of classrooms and diverse settings, including a suburban preschool classroom, a rural first grade classroom, a rural second grade classroom, and finally in a fourth-sixth grade suburban Montessori classroom. Through each of these experiences, a variety of students from different cultural backgrounds, different socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as students with a variety of social skills have touched my life and impacted the teacher I am today.

During my observation, I noticed there were distinct groups of students in terms of their social skills, including the “social butterfly”, while some would be more reserved and prefer to work alone. For example, in a first grade classroom where I observed there was one student in particular who was very intrapersonal and did not want to work or associate with other students in the classroom. In that same classroom, there was another student who played with everyone and anyone in the classroom; however, the teacher still identified him as one having socialization issues because he was apprehensive about presenting in front of his peers. Yet, without fail, in every classroom I have observed in there would always be a group of students who seemed to have very little or no socialization skills. These students might be considered the “wallflowers” of the classroom. Characteristics of these students include: not interacting with other students or teachers in the classroom, and never or very rarely presenting their work in front of their peers. Interestingly, often these students did very well academically, completed assignments in an efficient manner and stayed on top of their school work. I am interested to learn more about why students feel uncomfortable presenting in front of their peers, socializing, and making friends in the classroom.
Rationale

Growing up, I was shy and had trouble making friends. I would have considered myself the “wallflower” of my classroom. Therefore, I am interested in why students feel or do not feel acceptance from their peers. I was a shy student and never liked getting up in front of the class and presenting information or talking with other students in the class. However, I am now well on my way to becoming an early childhood teacher. I want to share my struggles with other students who might be going through many of the same issues that I have faced throughout my whole life. I want to show them that I have effectively overcome most of my socialization issues overtime. I have joined many organizations through which I have expanded my comfort zone forcing myself to interact with other people. These organizations also greatly enhanced my public speaking skills and helped me to feel comfortable in front of a group of people.

Theoretical Framework

Research has defined two categories in which the factors that affect a child’s ability to socialize are grouped. The two categories that influence a child’s social competence are inside-out and outside-in. Inside-out influences are characteristics, skills and abilities of a child that are associated with his or her social performance (Brown, Odom & McConnel, 2003). Some cannot be changed like the child's sex, neurology or some types of disabilities. Other characteristics are affected by the child’s experiences and the child’s environment. Examples of inside-out influences that will be discussed in the literature review include the neurology and brain development, gender, cognitive, specifically social cognitive, language-communication and disabilities. The second category used to separate influences on a child’s social competence are outside-in influences. These types of influences come from outside of a child. These influences follow an ecological systems perspective proposed by Brofenbrenner. They can be
conceptualized as being proximal or close to the child, such as family or classroom environments. The influences could also be distal, or more distant from the child’s immediate environment, such as culture. Examples of outside-in influences that will be examined in the literature review include family, classroom and teacher quality, early intervention, peer group friendships and culture-ethnicity (Brown et al., 2003).

Another major issue in terms of socialization in the early childhood classrooms is friendships, or the lack of friendships. Ramsey (1991) points out that in early childhood classrooms, young children are gaining social knowledge and learning how to relate effectively to other people. As children experiment with social interactions, they develop new theories about how the social world works.

Research has shown that some people are better at making friends than others. This trait tends to stick with a person throughout his or her life. In their research, Kostelnik, Soderman, and Whiren (2004) discuss this very phenomenon. They suggest that most educators assume that some people are just better at making friends than others and nothing can be done to change that in education. They believe that the most appropriate place for students to make friends is on the playground before or after school, not during the school day. The lack of friendships in the early childhood classroom is a major component of why students perceive themselves to have low peer acceptance.

The problem that will be explored throughout this thesis is why a growing majority of students in the early childhood years do not have the socialization skills expected at their age. The perceptions of their teachers will also be analyzed as to why their students do not possess these skills. The focus of the study will be to understand what is currently taking place in a
typical early childhood classroom to promote socialization, how this affects the child, as well as teacher beliefs and student perceptions of their peer acceptance.

*Importance of Study*

During my student teaching and other field observations while at the University I have seen many elementary-aged students struggling with the same issues that I struggled with as a child. For example, I had trouble presenting in front of my classmates, making friends was a struggle for me, and being able to reach out to others was very hard for me to do. My purpose for doing this research was to let students know that there are others out there that went through what they are going through and that they can implement strategies that will enhance their success in life and in speaking before groups. I think methods can and should be employed in schools to make it easier for the students, with identified socialization issues, to effectively socialize and feel comfortable in front of their peers.

After witnessing firsthand how students feel when they lack needed socialization skills, and through observations in which students were struggling with socialization skills, I wanted to know why and how this phenomenon occurs in early childhood classrooms. Therefore, through the completion of this project, I hoped to find out why students struggle with socialization problems in an early childhood classroom.

*Purpose of the study*

This study will focus on the students’ social skills or lack thereof. The purpose of this study was to explore students’ and teachers’ perceptions regarding students’ social skills, based on their perceptions of peer acceptance. Through the completion of this project a connection to find out why students are afraid to socialize, and why they feel shy about talking to the teacher or presenting in front of their peers was discovered. It was expected that the students who were
identified by their teachers, as ones who lack social skills, will give themselves low scores in the peer acceptance categories on Susan Harter’s scale (Harter & Pike, 1981). I want to give students with identified socialization issues, the skills they need to be less shy and more confident in the classroom and in front of their peers.

Research questions

This thesis will strive to answer the following research questions:

- How do children in this sample compare to the normative sample reported by Harter and Pike (1984) on the cognitive competence, physical competence and peer acceptance domains?
- What are the teacher’s beliefs about students with socialization issues?
- Are the teachers’ and the students’ perceptions of the student’s self-competence consistent with one another?

The proposed plan that was developed to answer these research questions was to go to different schools and grade levels, and ask the teachers to identify a few students who have troubles with socialization skills. After this, I interviewed the teachers and observed what socialization activities they already have in place and what socialization opportunities they provide in their classrooms. After the interviews, I gave each teacher a student demographic form, and a perception form to fill out for each student. When I went back to the school to survey the students I collected these forms. I then administered the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children (Harter & Pike, 1981) to each of the students identified and recorded the scores.

Chapter two will focus on the literature currently published relating to the topic of socialization in the early childhood classroom. The literature presented in chapter two will
support the purpose for completing this study. Chapter three will discuss the methodology used in selecting participants for this study, how data were collected, and where the participants were located and how they were selected. This chapter will talk about the instruments used to carry out the research and how each one was administered in the study. Chapter four of this thesis will give a detailed analysis of the results derived from the study. The chapter will analyze data collected from all sources. Finally, chapter five will provide conclusions and recommendations for further research on the topic of socialization.

Definition of Terms

Confidence: refers to not being identified by the teacher as one who lacks the social skills should this study be repeated.

Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children: refers to Susan Harter’s (Harter & Pike, 1981) survey that was administered to each student. The survey consists of pictures for each of the two grade level versions, which are bound separately, as are sets for boys and girls. Therefore, there are four books of pictures, both a boys’ and girls’ set for the preschool-kindergarten and the first-second grade versions. The questions in each item are the same for boys and girls, only the gender of the target child in each picture was different. In each booklet items occur in the order of cognitive competence, social acceptance, physical competence, and maternal acceptance, and continue to repeat in that order (Harter & Pike, 1984).

Socialization issues: refers to the students whom the teacher identifies as lacking social skills when compared to students of the same age, this could be due to shyness, being withdrawn in class, or apprehension about presenting in front of peers.
Social skills: refers to the ability of the student to speak to their friends, initiate friendships, present in front of their classmates, and feel comfortable talking to others. The lack or presence of social skills was determined by each teacher when selecting students for the study.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Several studies have been completed on why students do not have the necessary socialization skills in the early childhood years (Saracho & Spodek, 2007; Ramsey, 1991). Many students in the early years do not have the skills necessary, or perhaps feel shy talking to their peers, presenting information in front of large groups, and many times do not try to change this behavior in the classroom. Through the completion of a literature review, numerous reasons were found as to why students lack these needed skills. They include: the child’s gender, brain development, cognitive skills, communication and language skills, as well as disabilities were some of the factors discovered in the research. This section of the paper will focus on literature that has been written on the topic of socialization issues in early childhood students. 

Theories of Socialization

Freeman and Mathison (2009) describe several different theories of socialization amongst children. First, the social constructivist perspective assumes that humans, children and adults, play an active role in their own socialization process. The personal attributes such as age, gender, or race are not minimized; they are interactive, complex, dynamic, and ever changing. Second, the developmental model views childhood as a developmental period in which children progress through established cognitive and biological stages. In this model children are viewed as becoming and not being. Finally, the normative socialization model is built on Locke’s view that children come to the world as blank slates. Under these perspectives are behaviorism and social learning theories.

There are three common socialization models of childhood: developmental, normative socialization, and social constructionist. Each perspective places a different emphasis on the role that biology and environment play. First, is the developmental model, which regards childhood
as a developmental period in which children progress through established cognitive and biological stages. In this perspective, children are in the process of “becoming” someone, not as “being” themselves. Children are viewed as incomplete, immature, and irrational beings who gain maturity over time. Second, normative socialization models are built on the belief that children come into the world as blank slates. This perspective includes behaviorism and social learning theories. The focus of normative socialization is on the theories, which influence the behaviors of the children, and not on the understanding of the children themselves. Finally, a social constructivist perspective assumes that humans, children and adults, play an active role in their own socialization process. These perspectives have focused on ways that social norms are internalized by children (Freeman & Mathison, 2009).

*Play and socialization*

An important way that children develop socially is through play with other children. The teacher in a classroom is responsible for thinking about and guiding the children’s socialization. One of the best ways to determine children’s social and communicative competence is through observation of children’s talk and interactive behavior. Teachers are aware that the nature of children’s play and social interaction is related to the physical environment of the school setting (Hoorn, Nourot, Scales & Alward, 1993).

According to Browne, et al. (2008), research has suggested that the use of toys among children may affect the language discourse in play settings. However, gender plays a role in how much and what type of social interaction was present in the play situation (Burroughs & Murray, 1992). However, play materials were equally effective in starting conversations from preschool boys and girls. However, gender differences were noted, specifically: boys introduced more topics during play, while girls remained on topic for longer periods.
Bredekamp and Copple (1997) describe the importance of play as, “Children do not construct their own understanding of a concept in isolation but in the course of interaction with others (p. 114). Social skills that students attain through the act of play include: the ability to work towards a common goal, initiate or the ability to keep a conversation going, and cooperation with their peers.

*Friendships and socialization*

Friendships are important, not only to the children’s enjoyment of school and recreational activities, but also many aspects of their physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development (Ramsey, 1991). Friendships contribute to the children’s successful adjustment to school. Ladd and Price (1987) found that children who began kindergarten in a class with several of their friends had more positive feelings about school. These two studies show that friendships in school and peer acceptance is important to be successful academically and socially.

Ramsey (1991) points out that in early childhood classrooms, young children are gaining social knowledge and learning how to relate effectively to other people. As children experiment with social interactions, they develop new theories about how the social world works.

However, there have always been people in the world who are better at making friends than others. Whether they are young children, teenagers, or adults; some people are just naturally better at making friends than their peers. Kostelnik, Soderman, and Whiren (2004) discuss this very phenomenon in their research, saying that most educators assumed that some people were just better at making friends than others and nothing could be done to change that in the educational environment. After years of research, Kostelnik et al. (2004) found that the most appropriate place for children to deal with this issue was on the playground before and after school, not during instructional time.
To effectively assist children in improving their friendship skills, adults must understand the role that friendship plays in children’s life. As they mature, children become increasingly interested in establishing friendships (Hartup, 1996). Researchers have documented that by age seven, most children think that not having a friend is unthinkable (Hendrick, 2000). Kostelnick et al. (2004) describes the benefits of having friends by suggesting that friends provide stimulation, assistance, companionship, and affection. They go on to discuss that, children experiment throughout a friendship with a number of social roles, including leader, follower, risk taker, and comforter.

Children who are well liked by their peers are usually capable and more mature in all aspects than their peers. Popular children are more positive, approach peers with smiling expressions, and their feelings are appropriate to the situation as opposed to their peers who are not as popular (Ramsey, 1991). This makes sense, because popular children will tend to have more friends and hence more practice in socializing with peers.

Children’s idea of what a friend is changes throughout their lifetime. Children at various points of their development view friends differently than do adults. Children between the ages of 3 and 7 are better at initiating friendships than they are at keeping them. Students this age often have a hard time initiating play with others, or accepting another child’s invitation to play (Kostelnick et al., 2004). Later in their understanding of friendship children begin to look for qualities in how they pick and who they consider to be their friends. Between the ages of 4 and 9 years, children begin to look for pleasing behaviors from others, such as giving one another turns, sharing toys, or choosing to sit together. Children in this phase of friendship want to have friends so badly that they often use bribes or threats to attain friends. Also, they have difficulty
having more than one friend at a time, and often will say something like, “You can’t be my friend-Bryan already is my friend.”

*The impact teachers have on the development of socialization*

Despite the importance of social development and the amount of current research in the area, many educators resist the notion that children’s social concerns should be a central consideration in designing classrooms (Ramsey, 1991). Teachers have a misconception that the main point for social intervention is popularity. She suggests that the main goal for social development is to help children find their own ways to interact comfortably with peers and to feel good about themselves. One example of fulfilling a child’s social potential is that the child learns to feel alright about playing alone. In addition, children who desperately want to be in the group but are too shy or awkward need to learn enough social skills so that they can become as much a part of the mainstream as they want.

According to Friedman (1980), shy students develop more negative attitudes towards school than their non-shy peers. One reason for this negative attitude is the teacher’s response to the student’s shyness. Teachers tend to write-off a shy student, thinking there is no help for them in the classroom. Teachers tend to see students who are apprehensive about speaking up as having lower potential for academic achievement, less relationships with other students, and lower probability for future success than their peers who have considerably less apprehension. As could be inferred, this continued pattern over a period of time has a negative effect on the student. Friedman points out those shy children do not usually volunteer in class and are hesitant when they do. Therefore, these children are perceived as less capable, they are called on less by the teacher than are their non-shy peers.
Teachers are not very tuned into social issues that are occurring right in their own classroom. Or, if they are aware, they are too preoccupied with other pressing classroom management issues to tend to the social issues. Friedman (1980) says that studies have shown that during the first years of teaching in a classroom, teacher attitudes are less concerned with students taking initiative and being outgoing as they are with establishing an orderly classroom, and abiding by the academic standards.

The teacher has many roles to play in the classroom for the students. A major role for the early childhood teacher is to see that children have enjoyable social contacts and to help children desire to want to be around others (Gordon & Browne, 2008). Suggestions to promote socialization among children include arranging a social environment. The teacher needs to provide opportunities for child-initiated activities as well as group activities. Teachers should help children develop trust by trusting themselves, their peers, and their teachers.

*Inside-out factors: neurology and brain*

Brown, Odom, and McConnel (2003) describe inside-out influences as characteristics, skills, and abilities of a child that are associated with his or her social performance. Some characteristics are unable to be changed, like the child’s sex, neurology, or certain types of disabilities. Other inside-out influences may be affected by the children’s experiences and other elements of the child’s environment including cognitive and language skills. A child’s neurology and brain development affects his or her social competence at an early age. Over the first years of life, children’s brains mature and allow them to acquire knowledge and use it in social contexts. Mundy, Card, and Fox (2000) observed 4-year old children in social situations and assessed brain activity using an electroencephalogram. The results of their study revealed that the more socially competent children had greater EEG activity in the left frontal lobe.
Children who were more withdrawn in social situations had greater right frontal lobe activity. Mundy et al. (2000) indicated that such activity may be associated with children’s temperaments, which in turn relates to their social behavior. Researchers found that left frontal lobe activity was associated with an infant’s tendency to initiate attention (Brown et al., 2003).

**Inside-out influences: emotional competence**

A second type of inside-out influence that affects a child’s social competence is emotional competence. Brown et al. (2003) discusses that the ability to control or regulate emotions and behavior in social settings is an important characteristic associated with social competence of young children. Fantuzzo and Wayne (2002), found a strong relationship between both temperament and emotion regulation and peer play competence among African American children from the inner city. Another study completed by Blair, Denham, and Kochanoff (2004) documented that children’s ability to cope with emotional situations in an active, adaptive manner rather than a passive manner was associated with the development of pro-social behaviors.

Friedman (1980) discusses the harsh reality that shy students tend to be more emotionally disturbed than their non-shy friends. He states that many shy children lack friends; shy children are picked as playmates less often than non-shy students. Therefore, he concludes that shy children are more likely to be emotionally disturbed. Friedman continues to describe a student’s shyness as hesitation to disclose information about them, hesitation in socializing with others other than a primary partner. Other people, even ones who are shy themselves are less attracted to quiet people. The result of their shyness is their self-perception that they are less competent, in turn being less sociable, therefore, less appealing as a friend.
Inside-out factors: gender

Another factor that affects a child’s socialization abilities and skills is their gender. Much research has been done on gender biases in relation to their social abilities (Ramsey, 1991; Brown et al., 2003; Friedman, 1980; Eckes & Trautner, 2000). Gender differences do exist and can be seen as early as the preschool years. In preschool, it is generally found that girls engage in more pro-social behavior; girls also have more reciprocated relationships than do boys. The way each interacts with each other differs as well; boys tend to be more negative toward peers who exhibit internalizing behaviors, while girls respond more negatively to externalizing behaviors. When looking at the aggression toward peers, boys engage in more verbal and physical aggression and girls engage in more relational aggression. Girls have been found to be more successful socially than boys. Interestingly, peer acceptance in preschool predicts peer acceptance in kindergarten (Brown et. al, 2003).

According to Brown et al. (2003), gender differences do exist and may be seen as early as the toddler years. In preschool, a general finding is that girls engage in more pro-social behaviors. Vaughn and Azria (2000) found, in their sample of African American preschoolers, that girls had more reciprocated friendships than did the boys. Styles of interaction in peer play groups differ also. Brown et al. observed that boys were more negative toward peers who exhibited internalizing behaviors, while girls responded more negatively to externalizing behaviors. Other studies found that boys engage in more verbal and physical aggression and girls engage in more relational aggression (Ramsey, 1991; Kostelnik et al, 2004). Brown et al. (2003) reported that peer acceptance in preschool predicts peer acceptance in kindergarten. They also found that aggressive behavior in kindergarten mediated this relationship for boys, and both sneaky behavior and sharing mediated the relationship for girls. Clearly, by preschool age,
differences in social behavior exist, and in most cases girls exhibit more mature forms of social behavior.

There is a difference in communication styles based on gender. Eckes and Trautner (2000) verify this statement when saying boys and girls begin to differ in their language as early as preschool. They go on to say that in interactions with peers of the same-sex, boys use talk to compete, gain control over their peers, creating a status hierarchy. On the other hand, it is suggested that girls use talk to establish and keep relationships, show awareness of others’ feelings, and solve problems among peers. This is disconfirming evidence; most research suggests that girls talk more than boys. However, Eckes et al. (2000) suggests, in the preschool years boys talk more than girls. Interestingly, these same differences also occur among adults.

Inside-out influences: communication and language skills

Another inside-out factor that affects a child’s social competence is the child’s communication and language skills. Communication is important in social interaction among peers. In studies, which included young children who had been born preterm or full-term, it was determined that social connectedness, compliance, and noncompliance with their peers were strongly associated with language skills when children were 3 to 8 years of age (Herbert-Meyers, Guttentag, Swank, Smith & Landy, 2006). For African-American preschool children enrolled in Head-Start, it was reported that children’s language abilities were related to their competence in playing with their peers in the classroom (Brown et al., 2003; McAdoo, 2002). Odom, Zercher, L, Marquart, Sandall and Brown (2006) studied social relationships of preschool children with disabilities in inclusive settings and they found that communication was related to both social acceptance and social rejection.
According to Paciorek (2007) pro-social behaviors allow a child to interact with adults and children in an appropriate manner. Pro-social behaviors are usually grouped into three categories, sharing, helping, and cooperation, this is a three part process. Children must first recognize the need to perform one of the behaviors, and then decide whether to act or not, and finally the child must perform one of the skills (Paciorek, 2007). Most students need to be taught how to socialize and pro-social behaviors. It is not uncommon to hear a mother say, “you need to share your toys,” or “it is not nice to hit.” (Burke, 2008). The more the students are taught how to effectively socialize and how to appropriately use pro-social skills the more it will be ingrained in their minds to do it all the time. The more they practice the more natural it will become.

Inside-out influences: disabilities

The last inside-out influence that Brown et al. (2003) discusses is that of a child’s disability and its affect on the child’s ability to socialize. Odom et al. (2006) has extensively studied the influence of a disability on a child’s ability to socialize. For example, in a study about peer social relationships in inclusive settings researchers found that approximately 28% of their sample was well accepted in the classroom. This suggested to that there was adequate social acceptance among the students in the inclusive classrooms. Many young children with disabilities have been found to have social competence problems. Using a performance-based assessment of social competence, Odom, McConnell, McEvoy, Peterson, Ostrosky, Chandler, Spicuzza, Skellenger, Creighton & Favazza (1999) reported a significant difference in peer-related social competence for preschool age children with developmental delays and same-age peers without developmental delays.
Odom, McConnell and McEvoy (1992), discuss thoroughly social behavior of children with disabilities. They talk about the fact that preschool-age children with developmental delays often engage in fewer social interactions and less mature social behavior than their peers of the same age. Additionally, students with disabilities and/or developmental delays are not only unable to engage in social interactions, but it is harder for them to make and keep friends, be considered popular in school and are more apt to peer rejection, along with a long list of other negative issues (Odom et al., 1992). These students begin life far behind their peers without disabilities, because of something they often times have no control over.

*Outside-in influences: family influences*

Social competence is also affected by the child’s experiences and environment. Brown et al. (2003) calls these influences, which can be changed with interventions, outside-in influences. These influences can be proximal or close to the child such as family or classroom environments, or distal, more distant, from the child’s immediate environment, such as culture. Several studies show that family interactions and relationships have implicit links to social competence (Kostelnik et al., 2004; Brown, 2003; Ramsey, 1991). The main example of the family relationship influence is that of the initial attachment relationship, which most often occurs between the child and the mother. Research has indicated that the quality of attachment is associated with the quality of social relationships that a child establishes with peers. Family members may directly teach or promote peer interaction. It was reported that young children benefited socially from the presence of siblings in the home (Kostelnik et al., 2004). Family members promote children’s peer-related social competence by providing opportunities for children attending Head Start programs. Fantuzzo and McWayne (2002), found a positive relationship between children’s home-based play with peers and their pro-social behavior in a
Head Start classroom. Finally, Brown et al. (2003) suggests that the stability of the home environment and the resources available in the home affects children’s development of peer-related social competence.

Staniford (1978) discussed the fact that the family is really the first opportunity for a student to socialize. The family influences the child in many ways from birth until adulthood. In the early stages of life, a child has nothing else to compare to other than his or her family (Staniford, 1978). Therefore, the family is a major foundation to the child’s social skills in the early child classrooms. If the child comes from a family that does not promote the importance of socialization early in life, then that child will be put at a disadvantage when compared to their peers from a family that provided a lot of activities to promote socialization for their kids.

**Outside-in influences: classroom and teacher influences**

Many children spend the majority of their early childhood years in child-care and preschool classroom settings. The quality of the physical environment and the quality of the interactions and relationship with the teacher may influence the development of a child’s peer-related social competence (Friedman, 1980; Hoorn et al., 1993). Toys and play in an early childhood classroom have a substantial effect on children’s social competence (Friedman, 1980; Hoorn et al., 1993; Bredekamp, & Copple, 1997). According to Hoorn et al. (1993), children develop socially through play with other children. The teacher in a classroom is responsible for thinking about and guiding the children’s socialization. One way to determine children’s social and communicative competence is through observation of children’s talk and interactive behavior. Teachers are aware that the nature of children’s play and social interaction is related to the physical environment of the school setting.
Other outside-in influences that Brown et al. (2003) discusses include peer-group influences, friendships, and culture. Friendships and peer-group influences enhance a child’s social competence through play activities, and mutual identification of the other child as a friend. Culture is defined as a set of shared values that govern attitudes and behavior. Culture can be reflected by values of ethnic groups, socioeconomic groups, or even peer cultures that exist within a classroom. Again, outside-in influences are influenced by a child’s environment and can ultimately be altered by the child and/or their peers.

Perceptions of teachers’ and parents’ regarding school readiness

In a study conducted by Zhang, Sun, and Gai (2008), 218 parents and 370 teachers were surveyed to explore the following topics regarding school readiness, “physical well-being and motor development”, “social and emotional development”, “approaches to learning”, “language use”, cognition and general knowledge” and “family.” The study attempted to examine and compare kindergarten teachers’, elementary school teachers’ and parents’ beliefs about school readiness. Zhang et al. (2008) defines their use of the word school readiness as “the ingredients necessary to make a successful transition from preschool or other prior-to school-setting to the formal school environment” (p. 461). After conducting the survey, they found that there was a wide difference in ranking school readiness between teachers and parents. Parents seemed to focus more on a child’s ability to sit still, the ability to communicate with teachers, the ability to interpret and the ability to be independent. On the contrary, kindergarten teachers thought the manipulation skills and self-control were more important. It was revealed that factors such as sitting still, frustration tolerance, independence, and the ability to communicate with teachers were rated most important by parents, whereas, moral awareness, self-centralization,
manipulation skills and compliance with authority were most important among the elementary school teachers who were surveyed.

This study is being completed to bridge the gap in the literature available on socialization skills in the early childhood years. The students’ self-perception will be compared to Susan Harter’s (1984) normative sample in the domains of physical competence, peer acceptance, and cognitive competence. The study will compare the students’ self-perceptions with the teachers’ perceptions. This study will focus on teacher’s beliefs of why students lack certain social skills and how this affects their engagement in the classroom.
CHAPTER III- METHODOLOGY

This was a mixed methods study, which explored students’ and teacher’s perceptions of student’s socialization issues. Students in this sample were compared to the normative sample reported by Harter and Pike (1984). Reports of teacher’s beliefs about students’ socialization experiences were also explored. Finally, teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the student’s self-competence were compared to determine if they are consistent with one another.

The research methods for this study revolved around three critical questions. These three questions defined how and why particular data was collected. The first research question was: how do children in this sample compare to the normative sample reported by Harter and Pike (1984) on the cognitive competence, physical competence and peer acceptance domains? This question was answered through the implementation of Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children (Harter & Pike, 1981), which was given to all students in the sample.

The second question was: what are the teacher’s beliefs about students with socialization issues? Teacher interviews and teacher perception surveys were used to identify current practices related to socialization strategies in the teacher’s classroom. Through interviews and surveys, information was gained from the teachers and students involved in the study.

The third and final question for the study was: are the teachers’ and the students’ perceptions of the student’s self-competence consistent with one another? This question was analyzed using the teacher’s perceptions in conjunction with the results of the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children (Harter & Pike, 1981) taken by the students.
This study follows an interpretivist model paradigm. According to Glesne (1991), an interpretivist research approach uses formal instruments, including surveys, interviews and observations, to name a few. This study used the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children (Harter & Pike, 1981) as a key source of data collection. The study also implemented a teachers’ version of the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance of Young Children. In addition, interview data supported the findings of the Harter scale. Descriptive statistics and qualitative methods were reported; the use of both forms of data made this study a mixed methods study.

Site Selection

The project was completed at three different schools, using three different grade levels. Sites were selected based on familiarity and ease of access. I knew the principals in each of the three buildings and was able to gain permission to survey the teachers and students. Schools in different neighborhoods were selected for participation in the study to see if that might impact the results in one way or the other. The schools were Jackson Elementary School, Washington Elementary School, and Johnson Primary School.

Participants

There were two groups of participants for this study. The students for this study consisted of three kindergarten students (mean age=5.67), six first graders (mean age=7.33), and nine second graders (mean age=8). The kindergarten sample consisted of two females and one male. The first grade sample consisted of four females and two males. The second grade sample consisted of seven females and two males. The teachers were asked to choose students who they perceived had social issues when compared to their classmates. All participants were taken from

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1 All participant and location names have been changed to protect their identity
schools in middle class neighborhoods. The ethnic composition of the subjects was not very
diverse, as 97% of them were white, with the remaining 3% mixed, or Hispanic.

The teacher sample consisted of five Caucasian, female teachers. At Jackson
Elementary, I interviewed one kindergarten and one first grade teacher and the teachers gave me
examples of how they promote socialization in the classroom. Rachel has been teaching
kindergarten for 22 years. Christie has been teaching first grade for 22 years. At Washington
Elementary, I interviewed two second grade teachers, Lorie and Jan, and had them explain what
activities are implemented in their classroom to help their students socialize. Lorie has been
teaching for 32 years. Jan has been teaching for 25 years. At Johnson Primary, I interviewed a
first grade teacher, Sharon, and she shared with me ways in which she tries to promote
socialization with her students. She has been teaching for 16 years.

Instruments

Student data

The instruments for this study included the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and
Acceptance for Young Children (Harter & Pike, 1981). This instrument was selected to inform
the question of how each student who was selected to participate perceived his or her
competence and acceptance. The scale has been widely used and is well respected in the field.

The students were individually assessed one-on-one with the administrator using Susan
Harter’s “Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children” (Harter
& Pike, 1981). (Appendix D). The students were removed from class for ten minutes, were
taken into the hallway for the administration of the test and returned to class when completed.

There were two versions of the scale, one for preschool-kindergarten and one for first and
second-grades (Harter & Pike, 1984). The scale contained four separate subscales in the
kindergarten booklet: cognitive competence, physical competence, peer acceptance and maternal acceptance. The first three subscales only were in the first/second grade booklet used for this study. Each subscale contained six items. The two versions were not completely unique; there were common items in each of the two scales. As can be seen (Table 1) the cognitive subscales at the two developmental levels overlap. The preschool-kindergarten form contains a number of readiness skills (knowing colors, the alphabet, being able to count) in addition to performance on puzzles and obtaining stars on papers. The first-second grade version included skills encountered in the primary grades (reading, writing and arithmetic).

For the subscale of physical competence, four items occurred on both versions (swinging, climbing, skipping, and hopping). Two of the preschool-kindergarten skills (tying shoes and hopping), were replaced by more advanced skills for the first and second grade version (bouncing a ball and jumping rope).

Within the domain of peer acceptance, four of the items involving friends were common across the two versions. Two of the items on the preschool-kindergarten version (staying overnight and eating at friends’ houses) were replaced in the first-second grade version by others sharing toys and others sitting next to you. These were changed due to the importance in the primary grades of popularity (Harter & Pike, 1984).
### Table 1

**Items on Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children by subscale and Student’s Grade Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale and item #</th>
<th>Preschool-Kindergarten</th>
<th>First-Second Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive competence:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Good at puzzles</td>
<td>Good at numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gets stars on paper</td>
<td>Knows a lot in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Knows names of colors</td>
<td>Can read alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Good at counting</td>
<td>Can write words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Knows alphabet</td>
<td>Good at spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Knows first letter of name</td>
<td>Good at adding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical competence:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3*</td>
<td>Good at swinging</td>
<td>Good at swinging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7*</td>
<td>Good at climbing</td>
<td>Good at climbing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Can tie shoes</td>
<td>Good at bouncing ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15*</td>
<td>Good at skipping</td>
<td>Good at skipping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19*</td>
<td>Good at running</td>
<td>Good at running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Good at hopping</td>
<td>Good at jump roping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peer acceptance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2*</td>
<td>Has lots of friends</td>
<td>Has lots of friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Stays overnight at friends’</td>
<td>Others share their toys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
10* ………………… Has friends to play with Has friends to play with
14* ………………… Has friends on playground Has friends on playground
18* ………………… Gets asked to play Gets asked to play
22 ………………… Eats dinner at friends’ house Others sit next to you

Note- item number refers to position of the item in the order administered to the child. Asterisk designates item common to both forms.

The pictures for each of the two grade level versions were bound separately, as were sets for boys and girls. Therefore, there were four books of pictures, both a boys’ and girls’ set for the preschool-kindergarten and the first-second grade versions. The questions in each item were the same for boys and girls, only the gender of the target child in each picture was different. In each booklet items occur in the order of cognitive competence, social acceptance, physical competence, and maternal acceptance, and continue to repeat in that order (Harter & Pike 1984).

Teacher data

Interviews

Interviews were conducted at three different schools and with five different teachers. Interviews were used because they provide insights to the teacher’s opinions, perceptions, and attitudes towards assisting students with issues (Glesne, 1999). Interviews were used because they provided the simplest, most convenient way to gain knowledge of the teacher’s beliefs of their students’ social skills and information relating to the socialization opportunities in their classrooms.
*Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children (for teachers)*

On the rating scale, teachers rated their perceptions of students on the same questions that the students rated themselves on using the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children (Harter & Pike, 1981) (Appendix C). The teacher’s perception scale consisted of eighteen items, for which the teacher rated her beliefs on the student’s actual competence. The teachers first decided “what kind of child he or she is like”, and then indicated whether this is just sort of true or really true for that individual.

Teachers also completed a demographic survey which included demographic information on the child such as the student’s name, age, race, siblings, and birth order. The survey is located in Appendix B.

*Administration*

The scales were individually administered. The child was read a brief statement about each child depicted. The sample item for the girl reads, the girl on the left is usually kind of happy, the girl on the right is usually kind of sad. Are you, always happy, usually happy, usually sad or always happy? The child first chooses which girl she is most like, then chooses the circle on that side that best describes her. The booklets are set up so that the examiner sitting on the other side of the child can read the question and choices to the child (Harter & Pike, 1984).

The interviews each consisted of the same twelve questions, some interviewees were asked follow-up questions depending on their original answers. The interviews all took place in the teacher’s classroom. Many of the teachers had student teachers at the time of the interviews. If they didn’t have a student teacher, the interview was conducted during lunch or specials time in the afternoon (Appendix A).
Procedure

Before any data were collected the parents and teachers both signed consent forms giving permission for the interviews and the survey to take place (Appendix E & F). In addition, students were read a statement asking for their assent to participate in the survey, noting that their answers would be kept confidential (Appendix G).

Next, I went into three different schools and audio-taped five interviews with teachers. I interviewed each of these five teachers for the purpose of a.) identifying the activities and routines these teachers presently use in their classrooms, b.) determining the perceived effectiveness of the activities, and c.) understanding what activities could be implemented in the classroom that might work for these students. Two of the schools were in an urban area, while the final school was in a rural area.

After completing the interviews, I gave each teacher a packet of forms for each student they identified. Each packet contained a student demographic survey and a teacher perception scale, for each student. I asked the teachers to fill out the forms and to have them ready when I returned to administer the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence for Young Children (Harter & Pike, 1981).

I returned to the schools a week after the initial meeting, collected the packet of forms for each child. Then I administered the “Pictorial Scale of perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children” (Harter & Pike, 1981). This survey provided me with insight into the students’ perceptions about social skills. Coupled with the teacher’s interview answers, determinations were made as to why some students lack the social skills they should have in the early childhood classrooms when compared to their peers.
Data Analysis and Scoring

Each item in the student’s perception scale is scored on a four-point scale, where a score of four would be the most competent or accepted and a score of one would designate the least competent or accepted. Item scores are averaged across the six items for a given subscale, and these four means provide the child’s profile of perceived competence and social acceptance (Harter & Pike 1984). A teacher rating scale parallels the child’s instrument. Teacher’s rate the child in all the areas except maternal acceptance on a scale from one to four, they receive a short version of each question and rate their perceived rating of the child using a four point scale (really true, pretty true, only sort of true, not very true).

The data for the student survey were also analyzed. During the survey student’s scores were marked on a score sheet with his/her name. After the student completed the survey the scores were added for each category and the mean was completed. The score sheets were then placed together with the teacher perceptions of the students and put aside for the next student to complete the survey. After all surveys were completed I looked at the score sheets and first compared the student’s self-perception to the teacher’s perception and made notes on the student’s score sheet, comparing how well they matched up. The means were calculated by hand, while Microsoft Excel was used to find the standard deviations. The scores were then recorded in tables for the ease of comparing them to each student.

The data from the teachers’ rating scales were analyzed. The survey contained the same questions that were included on the Perceived Competence Scale for the students (Harter & Pike, 1981). Therefore the data were analyzed in the same method. Each checkbox was given a number of 1-4 in accordance with the Harter scale. Once all the numbers were entered into Microsoft Excel, the means, standard deviation, and maximum/minimums were calculated.
According to Glesne (1991), after interviews are conducted the data should be coded to provide ease in analyzing the data. “Coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data” (pg. 135). After completing my interviews and transcribing the tapes, the data were analyzed. I first read all of the transcribed interviews. After I read them through once, I made a list of four common themes among the five interviews. Once themes were established, I created a Microsoft Word document. Then, under each theme I listed quotes from the teachers that both supported and disconfirmed the theme I chose. I then organized the quotes based on the ones that supported each broad statement, being sure to include disconfirming evidence. Finally, I wrote a data narrative detailing the four themes and the quotes supporting the themes.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This chapter will report results from students and teachers, which inform the three basic research questions of this project. First, student’s self-perception scores were analyzed to determine how the sample of students compared to the normative sample reported by Harter and Pike (1984). Second, interview data from teachers were analyzed to explore teacher’s beliefs about teaching students with socialization issues. Third, teacher’s reports of their perceptions of the students in this study were compared to student’s perceptions of perceived competence and acceptance to identify the consistency (or lack thereof) of their perceptions. The research questions are: 
1. How do children in this sample compare to the normative sample reported by Harter and Pike (1984) on the cognitive competence, physical competence and peer acceptance domains? 
2. What are the teacher’s beliefs about students with socialization issues? 
3. Are the teachers’ and the students’ perceptions of the student’s self-competence consistent with one another?

To provide ease for the reader, this chapter has been organized by each research question. This section will deal with the findings that support research question one, which was: how do children in this sample compare to the normative sample reported by Harter and Pike (1984) on the cognitive competence, physical competence and peer acceptance domains?

Students’ Self Perception

According to Harter and Pike (1984), generally the majority of means are in the range of 3.0-3.6, which indicates that young children tend to report positive feelings of competence and acceptance. The researchers also noticed that the correlations between the teacher judgments and the students were very weak. However, they were able to conclude that agreement between the
student and teacher is highest in the cognitive competence domain, next highest in the physical domain, and negligible in the peer acceptance domain.

**Kindergarten Sample**

Table 2 shows the answers given by each of the kindergarten students, and the mean of the sample, as well as the mean of each subsection. The scores for each question are on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest, and 4 being the highest. It is evident from these results that the lowest category on each kindergarten child’s self perception was that of peer acceptance (Mean=1.98). This information correlates strongly to the teachers’ perceptions of these students in the classroom. On the teacher rating scale for each child the teacher ranks each child sort of true or really true when asked “this child doesn’t usually get asked to play with many friends.” The teacher marks the same two answers when the questionnaire asks “other children usually don’t want to sit next to this child.” In comparison to Harter and Pike’s (1984) finding that most students averaged a 3.0-3.6 in peer acceptance, the children in the kindergarten sample scored much lower (Mean=1.98). This suggests that these kindergarten students’ perceptions reflect the same message as that given by the teachers. Harter and Pike (1984) suggested that the teacher vs. student perceptions would have a weak correlation, however, in this sample that doesn’t seem to be the case. An important point to note is that one student (S3), when asked if he had many friends to play games with, said “I have zero friends to play with.”

Interestingly, student’s self perceptions aligned very closely to the teacher’s perception of the student in the classroom. This was not the case in Susan Harter’s study using the self perception scales (Harter & Pike, 1984). All of the students appeared to give honest answers. It was noted that many students expressed verbally their lack of friends, often times their faces turning red in disappointment when choosing a choice worth less than three points on the scale.
It was like the students were embarrassed to be choosing such a low choice, but they were following directions and trying to be as honest as possible. Even one student asked before answering certain questions, “Are you sure you aren’t going to share my answers with my teacher?”

*Table 2*

*Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children  Responses by Question for Kindergarten Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale, Item #, and Item</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive competence:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Good at puzzles</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gets stars on paper</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Knows names of colors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Good at counting</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Knows alphabet</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Knows first letter of name</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Column Mean</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical competence:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Good at swinging</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Good at climbing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Can tie shoes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good at skipping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Column Mean**

<p>| | | | |</p>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peer acceptance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Has lots of friends</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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**Column Mean**

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Maternal acceptance

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**Column Mean**

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<td>2.67</td>
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</table>
First-and Second-Grade Sample

Table 3 shows the mean scores of the first- and second- grade students’ answers to each question. Again, the lowest score across the scores of all the first- and second- graders is in the category of peer acceptance. As with the kindergarten sample, the teachers agreed very strongly with the student’s perception of themselves. Even the one student (S 15) who had a peer acceptance mean of 3.5, the teacher checked the box ‘really true’ next to the question, “this child has pretty many friends to play with.” When talking to the teacher she revealed that this student was picked because although she has many friends, she isn’t very outgoing and is really apprehensive to talk to anyone in the classroom. Additionally, a second- grade student (S12), when answering the probe about his perceptions of having friends on the playground, he said, “On the playground? I do.” Which explains why he gave a four for that question and low numbers for the other friend questions; he also said that “friends ditch me a lot,” when answering if he gets asked to play by others.

These results show that students, who were identified by their teachers as shy or withdrawn, perceive themselves as having very few friends. The child’s teacher would agree with the child’s perceptions. Not only did the students give low scores for the peer acceptance category across all three grade levels, but many of the students remarked their lack of peer acceptance and friendships through their facial expressions, by turning bright red when choosing the choice they did, looking around the room before making their choice. A few students even verbally said they had little or no friends to play with on the playground.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale, Item #, and Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Cognitive competence**

1. Good at numbers 3.0 1 4 1
5. Knows a lot in school 3.46 2 4 .64
9. Can read alone 3.26 2 4 .88
15. Can write words 3.46 2 4 .74
17. Good at spelling 3.6 2 4 .63
21. Good at adding 3.4 2 4 .74

**Column Mean** 3.36 1 4 .785

**Peer acceptance:**

2. Has lots of friends 3.06 2 4 .79
6. Others share their toys 2.73 1 4 1.03
10. Has friends to play games with 2.96 2 4 .81
14. Has friends on the playground 2.73 1 4 .79
18. Gets asked to play with others 2.4 1 4 .74
22. Others sit next to you 2.73 1 4 .80

**Column Mean** 2.76 1 4 .84
Physical competence:

3. Good at swinging  3.6  1  4  1.05
7. Good at climbing  3.4  1  4  .82
11. Good at bouncing ball  3.86  3  4  .35
15. Good at skipping  3.53  1  4  .83
19. Good at running  3.33  2  4  .72
23. Good at jumping rope  2.4  1  4  1.40

Column Mean  3.35  1  4  1.01

This section will discuss the results found surrounding research question two, which was: what are the teacher’s beliefs about students with socialization issues?

Teacher’s beliefs

The interviews consisted of the same twelve questions; some interviewees were asked follow-up questions depending on their original answers. The interviews all took place in the teacher’s classroom. The categories that were developed based on my interviews were: teaching is a profession that changes all the time; teachers need to change their methods constantly. Socialization can be promoted through group work. Teachers perceive students do not interact as much as their peers do because they are shy or withdrawn. Finally, parent involvement in the student's school life seems to affect socialization issues.

In response to interview question number three (Have you used the same teaching methods throughout your whole career? Why or why not?), every teacher stressed the importance of changing lessons and being flexible. Christie said “No! Things change all the time. You have to try new things.” Rachel expressed her need to change teaching methods by saying, “No, in
Based on the above quotes it can comfortably be concluded that the teachers in this sample believe that teaching is a profession that changes over time. Therefore, teachers need to change what they are teaching over time as well. Through the interview data, it is obvious that these teachers all take teaching very seriously, if they see that something is not working they will change it, to ensure they reach each and every child in their classroom.

In response to teacher interview question number five (Have you implemented activities in your classroom to support socialization?), the role of group work as a socialization strategy emerged. When asked about current ways they promote socialization in their classrooms, four out of the five teachers interviewed described group work among peers. Jan described how she paired her students “I also have the desks sitting in groups and I change these frequently so the students get to work with and get to know other students. Another thing is popsicle sticks to group or pair students together for a game or activity.” Rachel agreed that she groups students to try and promote socialization in her classroom, “I, lots of times put students with a partner to solve problems, complete a book page together, play a game, etc. I also encourage students in the class to include a student who plays alone at recess because our class motto is ‘We are kindergarten friends trying to do our best.’” However, not all teachers agreed that only cooperative group work promotes socialization among students, one teacher had another opinion. For example, Lorie said that in her classroom she promotes socialization through the passing back of papers, “Just having students return checked work to their classmates encourages learning other student’s names and faces. We also use name sticks to choose people as needed.”
Yes, every once in while you hear, “Oh, that’s who they are.” Even though there is one teacher that does not agree, the majority of those interviewed support the conclusion that cooperative learning groups support socialization in the classroom.

In response to interview question number eight (Why do you perceive that these students interact less than their peers do? Are they shy? Do they prefer to play alone?), it was identified that teachers perceive students do not interact as much as their peers do because they are shy or withdrawn. Most teachers agreed that the reason the students they identified interacted less than their peers was because of shyness. For example, Christie said the students she identified are “withdrawn, shy, prone to panic, very sensitive.” Rachel described the lack of peers and siblings leading to the child’s shyness, by saying, “only child who does not have siblings/peers to socialize with, parents don’t engage them in social activities, and parents don’t communicate with their children and promote self worth for their children.” Again, some teachers disagree that the reason the students didn’t interact was due to shyness and being withdrawn. Sharon, said, “John is more mature than the average first-grader and takes everything very seriously. Pam has a speech issue that inhibits her communication.” It was concluded by the above quotes that students interact less than their peers in a classroom due primarily to being shy or withdrawn.

In response to teacher interview question eleven (Do you perceive that these children’s parents play an active role in their child’s school life? Does the parent attend PTO? Does the parent help with homework?), teachers suggest that parent involvement in the student’s school life seems to affect socialization issues. When asked about parents helping their child with homework, Rachel talked about how the students’ parents did not participate in their child’s education, “these parents do not play an active role in their student's school life. The parents do
not attend PTO meetings. The parent does not actively and consistently get involved with their child’s daily homework activities.” Christie said this about the parents, “None attend PTO. All attend conferences.” Some teachers believe that students lack social skills partly because of the lack of parent involvement in the student’s schooling. However, two teachers said that the student’s parents were very involved in their child’s education but the student still lacked the social skills. Jan said, “both of these students’ parents are very active in the school. One is a teacher and PTO Treasurer and the other is a mentor and sub.” Therefore, while many teachers agree with the idea that parents play a huge part as to why their children lack the social skills necessary in the classroom, a few teachers report that the children have social skill needs but yet their parents are very active in the education of their children. From the data collected, it was mixed as to whether parent involvement directly affects the students’ social skills.

This section of the results will explore the results for research question three, which was: Are the teachers’ and the students’ perceptions of the student’s self-competence consistent with one another?

The data on teacher perceptions were analyzed. The results are shown in Table 4 for all three samples. As described earlier, the teacher’s version of the rating scale includes the same questions as the student survey. Therefore in Table 4, each question ranges 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest. The averages and standard deviations are recorded for each question for the whole sample. When one compares Table 4 with the scores of the first-and second-grade sample in Table 3, one will see that generally the teacher’s perceptions are a little lower than that of the student’s self perception. However, overall the two align pretty closely in most cases. For example, the column mean for peer acceptance on the teacher’s version of the scale is 2.74; the column mean for peer acceptance on the student’s scale is 2.76. These results
show that the teachers’ perceptions align very closely to the students’ in the category of peer acceptance.

*Table 4*

*Teacher’s Perceptions from the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children for All Samples by Subscale and Domain*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale, Item #, and Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>SD</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive competence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Good at numbers</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Knows a lot in school</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Can read alone</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Can write words</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Good at spelling</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Good at adding</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Column Mean</strong></td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Peer acceptance:          |      |         |         |     |
| 2. Has lots of friends    | 2.61 | 2       | 4       | .69 |
| 6. Others share their toys| 2.67 | 2       | 4       | .685|
| 10. Has friends to play games with | 2.72 | 1 | 4 | .83 |
| 14. Has friends on the playground | 2.7 | 1 | 4 | .82 |
| 18. Gets asked to play with others | 2.67 | 2 | 4 | .83 |
| 22. Others sit next to you | 3.05 | 2 | 4 | .802 |
Physical competence:

3. Good at swinging  3.0  2  4  .485
7. Good at climbing  2.83  2  4  .618
11. Good at bouncing ball  2.56  1  3  .615
15. Good at skipping  2.61  2  3  .50
19. Good at running  2.83  2  3  .383
23. Good at jumping rope  2.67  2  4  .68

In summary, as a result of research question one, students who were identified by their teachers as shy or withdrawn, perceived themselves as having very few friends. Students gave low scores for the peer acceptance category, as well as alluding to their lack of peer acceptance and friendships through their facial expressions and verbally. As a result of research question two, teachers believe that teaching is an ever-changing process, which requires them to be flexible. Teachers believe that group work promotes socialization in the classroom. It was concluded that teachers perceive that students are less interactive than peers because they are shy or withdrawn. Some teachers believe that parent involvement has an effect on the social skills of the students identified. Finally, as a result of research question three it was found that the students’ and the teachers’ perceptions aligned closely, especially in the category of peer acceptance.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Throughout this study, I wanted to understand the teachers’ perspective on why some students do not possess some necessary social skills and compare that with what the literature says. This thesis sought to answer the following research questions: 1. How do children in this sample compare to the normative sample reported by Harter and Pike (1984) on the cognitive competence, physical competence and peer acceptance domains? 2. What are the teacher’s beliefs about students with socialization issues? 3. Are the teachers’ and the students’ perceptions of the student’s self-competence consistent with one another?

The first research question was answered through the implementation of the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children (Harter & Pike, 1984). The study assessed student’s self perceptions of their social skills, acceptance, cognitive and physical abilities. It’s interesting to note that the student’s self perceptions aligned very closely to the teacher’s perception of the student in the classroom. This was not the case in Susan Harter’s study using the self perception scales (Harter & Pike, 1984). All of the students appeared to give honest answers when the scale was administered. It was noted that many students expressed verbally their lack of friends, often times their faces turning red in disappointment when choosing a choice worth less than three points on the scale. It was like the students were embarrassed to be choosing such a low choice, but they were following directions and trying to be as honest as possible. Even one student asked before answering certain questions, “Are you sure you aren’t going to share my answers with my teacher?”

The second question was answered through interviewing teachers; finding out what they currently implemented in their classrooms, and asking them to identify areas of weakness within their classroom. Through this study, the teachers reported that teaching is a profession that
changes all the time. Teachers need to change their methods frequently to meet the needs of students in the classroom constantly. Socialization can be promoted through group work. Teachers perceive students do not interact as much as their peers do because they are shy or withdrawn. Parent involvement in the student's school life seems to affect socialization issues. These assertions made by the teachers reinforced the research that is currently available: the effectiveness of play on socialization (Hoorn et al., 1993) and shyness in students as a major issue concerning the lack of social issues in early childhood classrooms. Shyness affects where students sit in the classroom, with whom they interact; shy children are not likely to be living pleasant or successful lives (Friedman, 1980).

The third and final question was answered through the comparison of the results of the Susan Harter scale for both the students and the teachers. Through analysis of the teacher perception scale it can be concluded that the teacher’s perceptions align fairly closely to the student’s self-perception of their cognitive, peer, and physical acceptance.

**Implications**

The findings from this study will benefit the teachers, the parents of the identified students, and the administrators of the schools. Teachers will be able to know what works and doesn’t work in terms of making sure their students are socializing in and out of school. More importantly, teachers will know the signs of a shy or withdrawn child and will be provided with activities to help this child immediately.

The students’ perceptions were anticipated at the beginning of this study. It was expected that students would have a low peer acceptance score; this was confirmed through the completion of the study. Therefore, this study could be used to raise awareness about the issues surrounding educating shy children. As was evident in the literature review, there are many
obstacles to overcome to ensure that shy children are receiving the same learning opportunities as their peers. Along the same lines, this study can help teachers customize a curriculum to fit the needs of children identified as having social issues.

*Recommendations for further research*

Teachers are on the right track. They perceive that students in their classrooms are shy. The next step for these teachers is to act on their perceptions and do something to help these students succeed socially. Activities that could be implemented in the classroom to promote socialization were handed out to each of the teachers for their participation (Appendix H). Further research could be done to see if the activities were implemented and if there was a change in their students’ ability to socialize. Would there have been a change over time in the social skills of the students? Did the teachers actually use the activities, which ones were effective, which ones were not effective?

Other research could be done to see if the results would change with a larger sample of students. It was intended to have a bigger sample of kindergarten students, however many of the consent forms were not returned. It would be interesting to follow these students throughout their educational career. Do the students remain shy and withdrawn until high school graduation? Do these students join clubs and/or activities to try to become more outgoing?

Finally, another research study could be implemented surveying all students in the class. All students complete the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children (Harter & Pike, 1981), even students who do not show any characteristics of being shy or withdrawn. Based on the students’ answers it might shed light onto why some students are shy in the classroom, while others are outgoing, and where the students in the middle lie on the continuum.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: TEACHER INTERVIEWS

1. What is your name and what grade do you teach?

2. How many years have you been teaching?

3. Have you used the same teaching methods throughout your whole career?

4. In your class, are there certain students that you know always prefer to work or play alone?

5. Have you implemented activities in your classroom to support socialization among your students?

6. What are these activities? Are they working? How do you know?

7. When looking at your class roster, who would you identify as students who least interact with other students?

8. Why do you perceive that these students interact less than their peers do? Are they shy? Prefer to play alone?

9. How many of these students you identified are boys?

10. How many of these students you identified are girls?

11. Do you perceive that these children’s parents play an active role in their child’s school life? Does the parent attend PTO? Does the parent help with homework?

12. Is there anything special that the children you identified participate in? Besides the normal classroom activities? Extra-curricular activities at school?
Demographic Survey

Student Name: ________________________    Age: ________________________

Siblings (#) __________ # of brothers ____________________ # of sisters ____________________

Birth Order _________________________

Born Prematurely? (Yes or No) ________________

Race: ________________________ Gender: ________________________

Child on IEP? ________________________ Speech/learning disability? ________________________
## APPENDIX C: TEACHER PERCEPTIONS RATING SCALE

**Teacher's Rating Scale—Younger Children**

Child's Name ____________________________

**Directions:** For each child, please indicate what you feel to be his/her actual competence on each question, in your opinion. First, decide what kind of child he or she is like, the one described on the left or right, and then indicate whether this is just sort of true or really true for that individual. Thus, for each item, check only one of the four boxes.

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<th>Sort of True</th>
<th></th>
<th>Really True</th>
<th>Sort of True</th>
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<th>Really True</th>
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<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
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<td>This child is pretty good at writing words.</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>This child isn't very good at writing words.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This child doesn't have very many friends to play with on the playground.</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>This child has lots of friends to play with on the playground.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>This child is pretty good at skipping.</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>This child isn't very good at skipping.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This child isn't very good at spelling words.</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>This child is pretty good at spelling words.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This child usually gets asked to play with other kids.</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>This child doesn't usually get asked to play with other kids.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This child can't run very well.</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>This child runs very well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This child is pretty good at adding numbers.</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>This child isn't very good at adding numbers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other children usually do not want to sit next to this child.</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>Other children frequently want to sit next to this child.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This child is pretty good at jump rope.</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>This child isn't very good at jump rope.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: SAMPLE OF SUSAN HARTER’S PICTORIAL SCALE OF PERCEIVED COMPETENCE AND ACCEPTANCE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN
ITEM 1

This girl isn't very good at numbers. Are you:
   Not too good at numbers OR Sort of good
   1                      2

This girl is pretty good at numbers. Are you:
   Pretty good OR Really good at numbers
   3                      4
APPENDIX E: PARENT CONSENT

April 19, 2010

Dear Parents:

My name is Bryan Kingsmill and I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University. I am working on my thesis. I am studying the development of socialization skills in early childhood classrooms. I am seeking your permission to allow your child to participate in a social skills assessment, which should last approximately 10-15 minutes. The survey will ask questions about what your child likes and does not like to do at school and with their friends.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If your child would like to participate in this study please sign and return the form below to your child’s teacher. Your child will also have the option at anytime to withdraw himself or herself from the study. Participation or deciding not to participate will not affect your child’s grade or participation in class in any way. If you choose to allow your child to participate they and you are free to withdraw them from the study at anytime for any reason.

This study will benefit your child and his/her classroom by making his/her teacher and me aware of how they feel in terms of socialization and their attitudes toward being social in class. This study will add to the literature on socialization in early childhood. The risks in carrying out this study are no more than your child would incur on a regular basis in an early childhood classroom. Your child’s name will be kept confidential using a coding system for survey results. The data will be stored in file cabinets that will only be accessible to the researchers involved. The data will be reported in aggregate.

I look forward to working with your child and helping them grow. I appreciate your willingness in allowing me to work with your child. Feel free to contact the Chair HSRB 419-372-7716, hsrb@bgsu.edu, with questions about participant rights.

Sincerely,

Bryan Kingsmill
216-956-4942
bmkings@bgsu.edu

Dr. Lan Li
419-372-7335
ll@bgsu.edu

Dr. Susan Peet
419-372-8257
speet@bgsu.edu

Mary Ann Culver
419-372-5453
mculver@bgsu.edu

****************************************PLEASE RETURN TO TEACHER****************************************

I, ___________________________ give permission for my child ___________________________ to take part in Mr. Kingsmill’s study on socialization strategies sponsored by the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

BGSU HSRB - APPROVED FOR USE
ID # 140720148637
EFFECTIVE 01/11/12
EXPIRES 01/11/16

529 Education Building
Bowling Green, OH 43403-0247
Phone: (419) 372-7320
Fax: (419) 372-8265
www.bgsu.edu
APPENDIX F: TEACHER CONSENT

April 19, 2010

Dear Teachers:

My name is Bryan Kingsmill and I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University. I am working on my thesis. I am studying why some students might not have the socialization skills necessary to be successful in an early childhood classroom. I would like to interview you and survey a few of your students to gain information about this topic and compare it to the research that I have studied. I am asking you to participate in an interview, fill out demographic information on your students, and fill out a post-assessment survey.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you or your students feel like they are unable to participate in this study for any reason then do not sign the form. Participation or deciding not to participate will not affect any relationship you may have with Bowling Green State University. If you choose to participate you are free to withdraw your students or yourself from the study at anytime for any reason. Participation in the interview, filling out the demographic information, and filling out the post-assessment survey will not take more than 30-40 minutes of your time. I will be in your classroom assessing your students for no more than 25-30 minutes.

This study will benefit your students and yourself by making you and me aware of how they feel in terms of socialization and their attitudes toward being social in class. The risks in carrying out this study are no more than your students or you would incur on a regular basis in an early childhood classroom. The results will be kept confidential using a coding system, only researchers will have access to the data. The data will be stored in a locked file cabinet.

Once I receive your approval, I will provide you with a letter to send to parents to request their participation in the study. I appreciate your consideration on this matter and look forward to working with you and your students. I will follow up in a few days to schedule an interview if you are interested. Feel free to contact the Chair HSRB 419-372-7716, hsrb@bgsu.edu, with questions about participant rights.

Sincerely,

Bryan Kingsmill
216-956-4942
bmkings@bgsu.edu

Dr. Lan Li
419-372-7335
lil@bgsu.edu

Dr. Susan Peet
(419) 372-8257
speet@bgsu.edu

Mary Ann Culver
(419)-372-5453
mculver@bgsu.edu

I, __________________________________________________________________________, agree to participate and allow my students to participate in Mr. Kingsmill’s study on socialization strategies sponsored by the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University.

Signature: _____________________________________________________________________ Date: ____________________________
APPENDIX G: STUDENT ASSENT

Student Recruitment and Verbal Assent

My name is Bryan Kingsmill and I am a student at Bowling Green State University. You have been selected to participate in this very special project. I won’t tell anyone your name or your answers to the questions I will ask. You don’t have to help me with this project. You can agree to help me with this project now and change your mind later. If you don’t want to help me no one will be mad. I would like to show you some pictures and ask questions about the pictures. This will take about 10-15 of your time.

If you help me with this project you will not receive or lose points in your grade, or your participation in the class.

Do you want to help me by answering my questions?
APPENDIX H: TEACHER ACTIVITIES

Sample activities given to teachers to use with identified students.

From Friedman (1980), ways to improve social skills

- Teacher should provide classroom opportunities that permit oral participation in the learning process, but not require it from all children.

- Role-playing newspaper reporters

- Students can prepare a social skills manual for students about to enter their grade or school, in which they suggest several ways to meet people, activities they enjoy, methods for deepening friendships, etc.

Ways to alter one’s self perception

- Ask students to draw a line across a paper labeling the start of it BIRTH and the end NOW. Students divide the line at the points at which significant changes in their social relationships occurred (a move, new school, death in the family, birth of a sibling, etc). Then ask them to list the people most significant to them at each stage, how they felt about these relationships, and what happened between them.

- Ask students to recall, write, and perhaps share their most embarrassing moments with other people, their most happy moments, their conflicts, the times they were most genuinely themselves.

- Ask students to imagine what they would like their lives to be like by the end of this year, next year, five years from now, etc.

- Ask students to imagine they only had a month to live. Suggest that they write what they would want to communicate to their friends, parents, siblings, etc.

From Bahman and Maffini (2008)

My Special Bag

This activity is designed to help children be aware of what is important to them and to develop their relationships with others by finding common interests. The underlying concept is to help them discover their own values. As a teacher, you can be a model for the children in your class.

- Decorate a bag creatively with your name on it.

- Put in the bag things that are special to you.
• Share the content of the bag with children at circle time, talk about the items, explain why they are important and how they make you feel.

• Ask children to do the same.

**Paper Plate Mask**

This activity helps the children get in touch with their feelings, recognizing what makes them happy, sad or angry.

• Ask each child to make three paper plate masks, representing three emotions.

• In groups, children discuss why they feel each emotion.

**Listening to music**

• Listen to different types of music

• Discuss the emotions each piece of music makes the children feel

**Emotion Charades**

**Puppet shows**

**From Beaty (2006)**

Activities to promote sharing

• Read books about sharing and talk about them

• Acknowledge and thank children who share

• Have a sharing toy that all must share

Activities to promote friendships

• Have children draw pictures of friends and dictate stories about them

• Have a “phone day” with one child making a pretend phone call to another

**Other Suggestions**

The lowest score on Susan Harter’s self perception scales was that of peer acceptance, therefore, teachers should provide opportunities for their students to interact with other students. Here are some ways teachers can provide these opportunities if they are not already doing so.
- Provide centers for students- centers provide opportunities for students to socialize with others through interactions, problem solve, and work with a variety of different students.

- Change seating assignments once a month –forces students to talk and interact with others in the class

- Encourage the class to accept and support all students, whether they act, look, or talk less than others- makes all students feel welcome, and like their opinion matters, they will be more likely to socialize and share their thoughts.

- Put on mini dramas where the whole class is involved-gives students an opportunity to interact with their classmates in a fun, creative way.

- Put on a class musical- gives students an opportunity to interact with their classmates in a fun, creative way.