WHEN IT ALL ADDS UP, YOU FEEL GOOD THAT YOU HELPED SOMEONE:

PROSOCIAL SKILLS IN THE CONTEXT OF SERVICE-LEARNING

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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Abstract

The present qualitative case study examines how high-quality service-learning might provide authentic experiences to support the development of prosocial skills in elementary school children. Through the voices of students in a progressive elementary classroom, the staff and parents, and documents and artifacts from their service-learning initiative, this study provides a rich understanding of service-learning as a pedagogy for school personnel (e.g., school counselors, teachers, and principals) in their quest to enhance and nurture positive behaviors in their students. The sample comprised 18 fifth graders and 13 adults, ten of who were parents and the remainder were school staff. Three major themes emerged from the participants’ collective responses: (a) the significance of the school’s philosophy of progressive education and learning environment; (b) the benefit of providing authentic processes in which to develop, understand, and utilize prosocial skills; and (c) the importance of sociocognitive constructs that predict prosocial development. Recommendations for school counselors, teachers, and principals are included along with implications for future studies.

Keywords: Prosocial Skills, Service-learning, Progressive Education, Elementary Children
Dedication
This study is dedicated to my parents, Gladys and Norman Hosansky and Ira and Shirley Robbins, my husband, Jerry, my children, Jessica, Joel, Benjamin, Mallory, and my granddaughter, Beatrice, who have supported me unconditionally in all my endeavors and encouraged me to embark on my doctoral journey.
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Fields of Study

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The school reform movement of the 21st century has created significant demands on K-12 educators. Being accountable for student achievement as measured by standardized tests, increasing student attendance and graduation rates, and creating safe schools free from violence and bullying, school personnel are continually seeking ways to meet their students’ needs (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2011; "School climate," 2012). School educators serve a significant role in the overall social and emotional development of children. Although teachers are usually the primary adult in the day-to-day school experience of their students, school counselors also make a significant contribution to the social, emotional, academic, and career development of the students (American School Counseling Association, 2004).

The development of prosocial skills, actions intended to benefit others, is one small, but critical component of a child’s growth and maturation (Carlo, 2006; Search Institute: Discovering What Kids Need to Succeed, 2011). It is important for educators to address both systemic and individual barriers to a students’ success (American School Counseling Association, 2004) and to articulate ways to address this specific aspect of social and emotional development. In this qualitative case study I will explore how high-quality service-learning may provide children with authentic experiences to develop prosocial skills. The current research suggests that there are numerous positive academic,
social/emotional, and career development outcomes for K-16 students who engage in high-quality service-learning (Bradley, 2006). Billig’s (2008) study of the District of Philadelphia’s character education program is one such study that supports this claim. Using a quasi-experimental design with matched comparisons to examine the academic and behavior outcomes from high-quality service-learning, the results of her analyses showed that reading, science, and writing scores on the Pennsylvania State System of Accountability test (PSSA) were significantly higher for the participating students than the comparison students. The school-related behaviors such as tardiness and suspension decreased for the participants, as well. Despite these claims, the vast majority of the studies focus on adolescents and college students (Astin, Vogelgesang, Iked, & Yee, 2000). Because the elementary years are critical for children’s social and emotional development, this study examines the experiences of primary children which are often seen as the critical years to develop prosocial skills (Cosaro & Fingerson, 2003).

Through individual interviews, focus groups, and analysis of artifacts (e.g. written reflections, drawings, process boards, and school documents), I conducted an in-depth qualitative case study on the perceptions of students, school staff, and parents of a high-quality, service-learning activity. Further, I examined how these individuals perceived the service-learning experience and how it may have helped promote prosocial development within and outside of the classroom context. This study was designed to provide important insight on how service-learning as pedagogy may promote prosocial skills in children. Additionally, knowing that the development of prosocial behaviors is one skill set that reduces the incidence of bullying and creates a more positive school climate, this
study has great potential in informing future research on utilizing service-learning as a way to combat unkind behaviors and promote a positive learning environment for children.

Statement of the Problem

School systems are continually being scrutinized and criticized by politicians and parents alike. At the federal and state levels, the school reform movement is focused on creating safe schools, free from violence and bullying and crafting schools with caring, high quality teachers and counselors, where learning barriers are reduced or eliminated to ensure that academic success and proficiency in 21st century skills (Hoover & Shook, 2003). Meeting these expectations is a multifaceted task. As standardized tests and the data derived from them seem to be the primary vehicle for measuring the success of the reform movement, the importance of the social and emotional development of children has been both overlooked and undervalued (Cohen, 2008). Based on the ASCA National Model (2004), school personnel, such as school counselors, have the responsibility to make sure the social and emotional domains are part of their counseling program. Therefore, providing a comprehensive school counseling program (CSCP) that remains committed to the social and emotional development of children is critical for school counselors. According to research on positive youth development (PYD) and the developmental assets, having prosocial skills is critical for children to grow into healthy adults (Search Institute: Discovering What Kids Need to Succeed, 2011). Further, children with these skills engage in less violence and bullying behavior, thus increasing the likelihood of a safe school environment (Cohen, 2006).
According to Dewey (1916) knowledge and skills are acquired through authentic experiences. Both knowing and doing are inseparable. Service-learning, an experiential form of education occurs:

through a cycle of action and reflection as students work with others through a process of applying what they are learning to community problems [while] reflecting upon their experience as they seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves (McHugh, 2004, p.2).

Reflecting on Dewey’s education philosophy, conducting research examining authentic learning experiences provided by high-quality service-learning that promotes the development and utilization of prosocial skills is worthy of further investigation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how service-learning may provide authentic learning experiences to support the development of prosocial skills of elementary children. The 40 developmental assets are often referred to as building blocks of healthy development for children and adolescents (Search Institute, 2011).

Collectively, they describe what is necessary to help youth grow up to become healthy, caring, and responsible citizens. Below is a description taken in verbatim from the Search Institute’s (2011) website of the different stages of developmental assets:

1. Early Childhood (3-5): The child begins to show empathy, understanding, and awareness of others’ feelings.
2. Grades K-3 (5-9): Parent(s) help child grow in empathy, understanding, and helping others.

3. Middle Childhood (8-12): Parent(s) tell the child it is important to help other people.

4. Adolescents (12-18): Young Person places high value on helping other people.

According to Kevin Swick (2001), an Early Childhood Education professor at the University of South Carolina and the director of the Service-Learning and Teacher Education Project, the process of caring is learned early in life. In his article on nurturing decency during the early childhood years, Swick (2001) presented what he called the *caring/serving paradigm*. “Serving is the primary means that people use to create a framework for open, nurturing, meaningful relationships” (Swick, 2001, p. 132). This concept supports service-learning as a vehicle for social development. Aligned with Swick’s perspective of service-learning, Barbara Jacoby (1996) asserts, “service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development” (p. 5).

Recognizing this connection between “caring and serving,” the purpose of my study was to examine the ways in which elementary-aged children learn how to care for others, using a high-quality, service-learning experience as the social context of inquiry. After conducting an extensive literature review, it became clear that the construct of prosocial behavior, not just caring, was what I was interested in studying. As a progressive educator/counselor, I became increasingly more interested in what kind of authentic experiences children needed to develop these skills. Because there are few
studies about young children engaging in service-learning, this study may add to the sparse literature on this topical area. In addition, this study provides elementary educators, such as school counselors, teachers, and principals, with new insights on nurturing the development of caring youth.

As national interest continues to grow in the area of empathy as a way to understand school violence, face-to-face bullying and cyber bullying, my study also provides insights into these very serious and complex issues (Caravita & Di Blasio, 2009).

Significance of the Study

This study offers critical information on the social and emotional benefits from one class in a progressive elementary school that engaged its students in a high-quality, service-learning initiative. It is quite likely that understanding the pedagogy of service-learning in the context of the social and emotional domain can inform the development of a comprehensive school counseling program (CSCP). As a qualitative case study, the findings cannot be generalized, but they can confirm or raise insightful questions for future studies in service-learning for educators to address the social and emotional standards in a school’s curricula. In addition, there are possible implications for studies on bullying prevention programs and understanding school violence.

Research Questions

My research questions focus on the following:

1. How do children and adults understand and describe the progressive school philosophy and approach to learning?
2. In what ways did the service-learning (e.g., Pencil Project) promote prosocial skills among children at a progressive school?

3. In what ways did the children demonstrate and utilize the learned prosocial skills in the classroom and beyond?

Assumptions

As I designed this qualitative case study and anticipated the collection, interpretation, and summary of my data, it was necessary to articulate the assumptions that I hold about progressive education, service-learning, and qualitative research, particularly with young children.

The statements below, which I have adapted from the study site’s staff handbook, best express my beliefs of a learning environment, educational philosophy, and roles of the adults in a school setting that supports the cognitive, social and emotional development of all children. Progressive education’s commitment to an emergent curriculum embedded in authentic learning experiences provided by educators (e.g., school counselors, teachers, etc.) who are trained in this world view provides the ideal environment for high-quality, service-learning opportunities and ultimately the development of prosocial skills.

Therefore, my assumptions are the following:

1. The community is created for teaching and learning for all ages.

2. Social consciousness is raised by encouraging the school community to examine and act upon complex issues within a democratic society.

3. Diversity among children and variation in their development is respected.
4. Teachers and parents collaborate as co-educators to meet the children’s needs.

5. Learning is embedded in thematic studies and authentic and emergent learning experiences are fostered.

6. Experiences are structured that actively engage children in the process of learning and guide child choice and decision-making.

7. Opportunities are designed to integrate the arts in the curriculum as an essential way to acquire and express knowledge.

8. Time and space are used in a flexible manner.


10. Learning groups and documentation are used to support and deepen learning.

Service-learning has been characterized by education scholars and practitioners in a variety of ways. Despite the differences, there are essentially five overlapping themes among these definitions. Dr. Jennifer Gildbride-Brown (personal communication, January 10, 2010) suggested that service-learning did the following: (a) modeled good practice with an emphasis on collaboration, reciprocity, and commitment, (b) promoted reflective thinking, (c) increased self-knowledge, cognitive complexity, knowledge of diverse others and communities, (d) deepened commitments to the “common good” and seeks a more just, equitable world, and (e) provided an intentional link of the activity to the curriculum in order to obtain learning outcomes.

My practical experiences, as a former teacher and current school counselor, support the connection between progressive education as a philosophy and service-learning as a pedagogical practice; however, the scientific literature is lacking in this area, especially
with young children. Conducting a qualitative case study with young children and significant adults in their lives is aligned with my previously mentioned theoretical frameworks, as well as my practical experience as a former teacher and current school counselor.

First, I believe that children’s perspectives should be heard and understood if researchers and practitioners want to deepen their understanding of experiences in which youngsters are engaged. Although perspectives, reflections, and observations of the adults in the school setting are worthwhile, hearing directly from the participants is invaluable (Patton, 2002). With this in mind, I sometimes wonder why this kind of research is not more prevalent. Perhaps some professionals are avoiding the lengthier process to obtain permission to do studies with children and the time consuming nature of working with youngsters. It has also occurred to me that many researchers may lack the training, experience, or comfort level interviewing and facilitating qualitative interviews with very young children (Irwin & Johnson, 2005).

Fortunately, my professional training and experiences have equipped me well for this study. I also strongly believe that the data and the interpretation of the findings may provide invaluable information for future studies, both qualitative and quantitative, to understand the link between prosocial skills and service-learning for elementary-aged school children. These findings have broader implications for educators, such as school counselors, teachers, and principals, who are committed to providing safe and caring schools, where children can actively engage in learning.
Definition of Terms

*High-Quality Service-Learning*

According to Barbara Jacoby (1996) “service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development… reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning” (p. 5). The standards for quality practice are provided in Appendix A.

*Developmental Assets*

Developmental assets are often referred to as “building blocks of healthy development” for children and adolescents. Consistent with developmental theory, the Search Institute has created four distinct lists of the 40 developmental assets for: (a) early childhood, ages 3-5; (b) K–3, ages 5-9; (c) middle childhood, ages 8-12; and (d) adolescents, ages 12-18. Each list is divided into 2 major categories: external and internal. The external assets are further subdivided into support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. The internal assets have four subcategories: commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Collectively these are designed to describe what is necessary to help our youth grow up to be healthy, caring, and responsible citizens.

*Prosocial Skills*

Prosocial behaviors - often studied within the context of moral development - are voluntary actions intended to benefit others. These skills are one of the internal assets
labeled “positive values,” as described in the 40 Developmental Assets published by the Search Institute.

*Progressive Education*

During the first half of the 20th century, the term “progressive education” was used to describe an educational movement based on ideas and practices aimed to make schools more effective agents of a democratic society. Although there is currently no single definition of progressive education, in the context of this study it can best be described as “an education characterized by authentic learning opportunities arising from the learner's interest with an emphasis on interdisciplinary experiences that consider the child holistically and as fully capable of acquiring deep understanding with equal attention paid to both the products and the processes of learning.” (C. Collaros, personal communication, July 5, 2012). It is through this lens that it is believed that children learn and co-construct experiences with their teachers and parent volunteers.

*Making Learning Visible*

Making Learning Visible (MLV) is a research project conducted by researchers at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University. One of the elementary schools in which this study is situated was a participant this research project. According to the MLV website, the study focuses on the group as a learning environment and documentation to see and shape how and what children are learning. MLV addresses three aspects of learning and teaching with the following research questions:

- What teachers and students can do to support the creation of learning groups in the classroom
• How observation and documentation can shape, extend, and make visible children's and adults' individual and group learning

• How teachers, students, and others are creators as well as transmitters of culture and knowledge ("Making learning visible," 2006)

**Authentic Learning**

Authentic learning is a common term used by progressive educators. It is synonymous with “real-life problems.” According to Renzulli, Gentry, and Reis (2004), authentic learning consists of the following four components:

1. It has a personal frame of reference…the problem must involve an emotional or internal commitment on the part of those involved, in addition to a cognitive interest.

2. No agreed-on or prescribed strategies exist.

3. Real-life problems motivate people to find solutions that change actions, attitudes, or beliefs.

4. Real-life problems target a real-life audience. (p. 73)

Thus, authentic experiences will be used in the context of these four criteria.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The responsibility of educating children could be viewed as a daunting undertaking for numerous reasons. First and perhaps most importantly, obtaining consensus among teachers, parents, and politicians about what content, skills, and experiences constitutes an educated individual varies from individual to individual. And even if they did concur with each other, the next challenge would be agreeing on the most effective and efficient way to accomplish this critical task. In fact, in all likelihood, the only consensus among these adults would be that the status quo for educating our children is not working (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Currently, there are many citizens and politicians involved in the school reform movement, each claiming to have the solution to our failing schools, each one “pointing fingers” at the culprit (Tyler & Cuban, 1995). According to Tyler and Cuban (1995) many assertions have been made regarding the root cause. It is the teachers’ fault that children are not well-prepared. It is the unions that protect the jobs of poor-quality educators that are to blame. Or is it the parents who are not doing their job? Another assertion is that unequal distribution of human and financial resources in certain schools or communities has created the problems with our schools. Building trust between teachers, parents, and school leaders (Bryk & Schneider, 2003) has also been suggested as a factor necessary for school reform. While the debate about school reform and
controversial legislation, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), continues, there are still many issues facing our youth that transcend mere academic problems. For example, juvenile diabetes and childhood obesity are both national concerns that schools are being asked to address, while the media would indicate that cyber-bullying and school violence have crept into most, if not every, community. With the complexity of the issues facing schools, I limit my study to exploring service-learning as an approach to making learning more meaningful, while creating caring, civically-engaged youth.

Social Development

According to ASCA (2012) professional school counselors are central to designing and delivering comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCP) that are driven by data and based on standards in academic, career and personal/social development. These programs should promote and enhance the learning process for all students. To this end, my research is focused specifically on the development of prosocial skills in the context of a high-quality service-learning initiative (e.g., Pencil Project).

The Importance of Prosocial Behaviors

Prosocial behaviors -actions intended to benefit others- is one component of a child’s social development that both education practitioners and researchers think should be of interest to everyone. According to Carlo (2006)

The study of prosocial behaviors has far-reaching implications for understanding group and individual level processes associated with morality, aggression, interpersonal relationships, mental health and well-being, and mental pathology…thus, the study of prosocial behaviors presents many potential
benefits to improving society and to furthering our understanding of human behavior (p 552).

In the educational setting, understanding prosocial behaviors is not only critical to the healthy development of each individual child but to the collective peer culture and climate of every school (Eirich, 2006; Search Institute: Discovering What Kids Need to Succeed, 2011).

In 1994, in response to the growing attention of social and emotional learning, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was founded to provide leadership for educators, researchers, and policymakers concerning the social and emotional learning of children and adolescents and its place in school curriculum (CASEL, 2002). In addition, they emphasized the need for safe, caring, and supportive learning environments whose academic benefits comprise stronger student attachment to school and an increased drive to learn (CASEL, 2002). To this end, this study examined and described the experiences of a group of children engaged in a high-quality, service-learning initiative (e.g., Pencil Project) and the perception of their parents and selected staff members to better understand how this experience may have contributed to the development and use of the students’ prosocial skills.

The Components of Prosocial Behavior

Prosocial behaviors are often studied within the context of moral development. In its broadest sense, the major paradigms that have emerged from the scholarly research in the field of moral development could be best represented by psychoanalysis, learning theory, and cognitive-developmental theory. According to Killen and Smetana (2006)
“the moral theories generated from these models were highly differentiated and represented competing interpretations of the origins, nature of change, sequence, acquisition, and end state of morality in the individual” (p. 2). The two researchers further stated that this field has “undergone a major transformation over the past several decades…[expanding] both in terms of diversity and theoretical perspectives represented, as well as range of topics studied” (Killen & Smetana, 2006, p. 1). Because the scope of this research is not conducive to an in-depth look of each of theories, it is important to acknowledge that the study focused less on the more traditional developmental stage theory and subscribed more heavily to a learning theory that defined “mature morality in terms of the child’s successful internalization of the norms and values of their culture” (Killen & Smetana, 2006, p. 2).

Although researchers and educators both agree that “the study of prosocial behaviors is relevant and important to understanding moral development” (Carlo, 2006, p. 551) “at the crux of [the] discussion and debate in the study…are definitional issues” (Carlo, 2006, p. 553). According to Carlo (2006) there are a variety of prosocial behaviors such as “sharing, comforting others, instrumental helping, money or goods donations, volunteerism, or cooperative behaviors” (p. 553). However, differentiating prosocial behaviors from other positive social skills is important when studying this construct. Carlo (2006) provides the following examples to illustrate some of the differences.

There are many investigations on different sources of support or attachment (e.g., social, peer, parenting) that primarily tap into the network of supportive
relationships or into perceptions of warmth, admiration, or respect. Other researchers examine social competence, which is a broad construct and often includes social interactions and communication skills (p. 553).

Likewise, moral reasoning, perspective taking, and social responsibility are also studied as distinct constructs but are considered theoretically relevant to understanding prosocial behaviors (Carlo, 2006). In addition, the sociocognitive construct of empathy, though often studied independently is also a component of prosocial skills. Therefore, the literature on each of these concepts will be presented, but it is important to note another ongoing debate amongst the scholars relevant to discussion of prosocial skills.

Scholars continue to wrestle with understanding the underlying motives for people to engage in prosocial behaviors. It is worth noting that “prosocial behaviors may be moral or amoral depending on the motive underlying this behavior” (Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Sadovsky, 2006, p. 519). This study will focus on that which is moral in nature. This debate regarding moral prosocial behavior often centers on altruism, a subset of prosocial behaviors. Carlo and Randall define altruism as “behaviors intrinsically motivated by the primary desire to benefit others” (as cited by Carlo, 2006, p. 554). This is particularly difficult to assess with young children who have often been viewed in the literature as largely egotistical and selfishly motivated, aimed at meeting their own needs. Eisenberg and Fabes, however, reviewed the work of other scholars who “point to substantial evidence that children often express care-based, prosocial behaviors” (as cited by Carlo, 2006, p. 551). As a result of this ongoing debate and limited research on
altruism in youngsters “most researchers of children’s prosocial behaviors have not distinguished altruism from other forms of prosocial behaviors” (Carlo, 2006, p. 554).

Recent studies of prosocial behaviors have examined “developmental and gender differences and on the correlates of [those] behaviors, including discussions of biological, age, gender, sociocognitive, and socialization correlates” (Carlo, 2006, p. 532). The sociocognitive correlates of prosocial behaviors that are significant to this study were perspective taking, prosocial moral reasoning, and empathy. More specifically, perspective taking is a sociocognitive skill that cognitive-developmental theorists have identified as an important predictor of prosocial behavior. It is described as the capacity to understand someone else’s situation, thus implying the ability to differentiate between others and self (Carlo, 2006). Carlo (2006) explained that this construct has been credited to Mead’s (1934) work on role taking but was the seminal work of Piaget on decentration, “the ability to shift attention to more than one aspect of an event” (p. 564) and egocentrism, “the lack of differentiation of subject and objects in social interactions” (p. 564) that prompted the study of this construct. Taking the perspective of another can be viewed in the literal sense (e.g., visual point of view) or with respect to thoughts, intentions, or the emotional state of another (Carlo, 2006). In this qualitative study, through the voices of the children who participated in service-learning, perspective taking was explored.

Another sociocognitive correlate that links cognition with prosocial skills is moral reasoning, defined as “thinking in dilemma situations where issues of justice, fairness, or caring are prevalent” (Carlo, 2006, p. 565). Past studies have suggested that a people’s
approach to moral reasoning often “reflects their orientation to the needs of others or their own... [And] might be linked to values or emotions (e.g., shame, guilt, etc.) that facilitate responding to others’ needs” (Carlo, 2006, p. 565). Scholars of these studies have classified moral reasoning as justice-oriented and care-based, prosocial moral reasoning. The later is specifically defined by Carlo (2006) as “thinking about a dilemma situations in which one’s needs are in conflict with the needs of others in the relative absence of formal laws and rules” (p. 565). It is the care-based, prosocial moral reasoning that has been “most strongly conceptually linked to prosocial behaviors” (Carlo, 2006, p. 565). Eisenberg (1982) theorized from her longitudinal study that as children and adolescents increased their cognitive reasoning, prosocial moral reasoning became more developed. Table 1 outlines Eisenberg’s levels of prosocial moral reasoning over the lifespan.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prosocial Moral Reasoning Level</th>
<th>Approximate Grade School Period of Frequent Occurrence</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hedonistic, pragmatic orientation</td>
<td>Preschool, early elementary school</td>
<td>Behavior satisfies own needs, gains for self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs of other orientation</td>
<td>Preschool, elementary school</td>
<td>Concern for physical, material, and psychological needs of others in simple terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotyped, approval-focused orientation</td>
<td>Elementary school and secondary school</td>
<td>Stereotyped images of good and bad people and concern for gaining others’ approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic orientation</td>
<td>Late elementary school and secondary school</td>
<td>Reasoning reflects an emphasis on perspective taking and empathic feeling for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalized values orientation</td>
<td>Minority of secondary school students and high school students and beyond: no elementary school students</td>
<td>Focus on internalized values, norms: desire to maintain contractual obligations; belief in dignity, rights, equality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Levels of Prosocial Moral Reasoning (Eisenberg, 1982)

Empathy, the capacity to understand another person’s feelings or condition and is similar to what the other person is feeling or would expect to feel in a given situation, is another sociocognitive construct that is associated with prosocial behavior. Sympathy and compassion are often viewed as being closely related to empathy because “they reflect [an] orientation toward another’s distress or pain, and feelings of sadness or concern on behalf of that person” (Hastings, Zahn-Waxler, & McShane, 2006, p. 484).
In both theory and empirical findings, empathy appears early in life as there is a “developmental shift over time from self-concern in response to others’ distress to empathic concern for others that results in other-oriented prosocial behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 519). Hastings, et al., (2006) provided an overview of the developmental nature of empathy and caring behaviors in humans.

*Global empathy* is the first of four hypothesized developmental levels of empathy. The reflexive crying of infants in response to the crying of other infants is viewed as a primitive, biological precursor of empathic arousal (Sagi & Hoffman, 1976).

The second level of empathy is referred to as *egocentric empathy*. Beginning in the second year of life, when object permanence begins to emerge and self-other differentiation develops, egocentric empathy unfolds. During the third year of life, children become aware that other people’s needs and feeling may differ from their own marking the next developmental stage of empathy, *empathy for another’s feelings*. The fourth level, *empathy for another’s life condition*, extends beyond immediate situations to for which abstract thinking is necessary (Hastings et al., 2006).

Because my research focused only on the social and cultural components of how children develop and experience care for others, it is important to note that empathy has also been studied from a biological perspective. Studies of the relationship between empathy and genetics, neuroscience (e.g., anatomical, physiological, and endocrine components), autonomic measures (e.g., heart rate, blood pressure, skin conductance, and respiration), and temperament are relatively new. Because of advances in imaging
technologies, researchers have “made a case that empathy is a hardwired feature of human biology” (Langstraat & Bowdon, 2011).

Studies on parents’ socialization practices impact the development of sympathy in their children. Eisenberg et al. (2006) acknowledge that although genetic make-up may contribute to a child’s capacity for empathy, parental behaviors are also contributing factors. What children observe and how they interact with their parents or other adult caregivers is also likely to contribute to individual differences in empathy-related response beyond any genetic factors (Eisenberg, et al., 2006). However, the research regarding how peer culture, teachers, and the school environment contribute to the socialization of children’s development of prosocial skills is lacking along with studies on cultural differences (Eisenberg, et al., 2006). In the context of a progressive elementary school committed to engaging their students in high-quality service-learning, I explored how socialization, beyond that of parents, influenced the development and care for others (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

The study of prosocial behaviors is beneficial to the healthy development of children and adolescents and the creation of a safe and caring school environment which promotes positive attachment to school and motivation to learn (Cohen, 2006). Additionally, in the broadest sense, these two outcomes may positively impact future citizens as individuals and the society as a whole. It is worth noting that these behaviors are often studied within in the context of moral development and although perspective taking, moral reasoning, and empathy are seen as distinct constructs, each is relevant to understanding prosocial behavior (Carlo, 2006). For this study, I examined and described
the experiences of children involved in a high-quality service-learning experience that
provided an authentic opportunity to develop perspective taking, empathy, moral
reasoning and other dimensions of prosocial behavior.

Strength-Based Approaches to Child and Adolescent Development

Positive Youth Development

Researchers and practitioners have learned a great deal in the past several decades
about elements in the human experience that have long-term, positive outcomes for
children and adolescents. In the past, studies of child and adolescent development have
focused on the impact of “risk factors” such as abuse, divorce, alcohol and drug use,
poverty, and social change.

However, according to Benson, Scales, Hamilton, Sesma, Hong, and
Rohehlkepartain (2006) “the pendulum swing away from abnormal development began
with the study of resilience- the amazing ability of some adolescents to succeed, even
thrive, despite challenges, obstacles, and deficits that led many of their peers to make
disastrous choices” (p 1). Others, such as Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and
Hawkins (2004) explain this as a shift from a prevention approach, designed to focus on a
single problem behavior, to a focus on identifying factors that promote positive youth
development. Becoming a healthy adult requires more than avoiding drugs, violence,
school failure, and precocious sexual activity. Attention to children’s social, emotional,
behavioral, and cognitive development began to be seen as key to preventing at-risk
behaviors.
Today, for education researchers and practitioners, more attention has been placed on strength-based models (Scales & Benson, 2005; Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000)). One of these is known as positive youth development (PYD). William Damon, a professor of education and the director of the Center on Adolescence at Stanford University, argues that PYD provides a shift in psychological theory and research, with observable consequences for professionals committed to the healthy development of our youth. According to Damon (2004), this new approach views youth as assets to society rather than problems, focusing on their strengths not their challenges.

The PYD constructs are used to promote social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and moral competence and healthy bonding. They also include fostering resilience, self-determination, spirituality, pro-social norms, self-efficacy, a clear and positive identity, and a belief in the future. And the last two objectives of PYD programs are to provide recognition for pro-social involvement and positive behavior (Catalano et al., 2004). Further, PYD programs are those that aim to reach one or more of these objectives.

Because of the growing interest in the healthy development of the youth of our nation, many organizations have emerged to address this issue. One such organization committed to our nation’s youth is America’s Promise, founded in 1997. According to their website, About the Alliance (2009), they are a Cross-sector partnership of 400+ corporations, nonprofits, faith-based organizations and advocacy groups that is passionate about improving lives and changing outcomes for children. We have made a top priority of ensuring that all young people graduate from high school ready for college, work and life. Our
work involves raising awareness, encouraging action and engaging in advocacy to provide children the key supports we call the Five Promises: Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, An Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others.

The Forum for Youth Investment is another such organization. On their website, About Us (n.d.), this group describes itself as

A nonprofit, nonpartisan "action tank" dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are Ready by 21®: ready for college, work and life. Informed by rigorous research and practical experience, the Forum forges innovative ideas, strategies and partners to strengthen solutions for young people and those who care about them. A trusted resource for policy makers, advocates, researchers and program professionals, the Forum provides youth and adult leaders with the information, connections and tools they need to create greater opportunities and outcomes for young people.

Although the goals of these organizations are quite admirable and lofty, I focus my attention on the research of the Search Institute. The Search Institute founded in 1958 in Minneapolis as an independent, non-profit, non-sectarian organization dedicated to the positive development of children and adolescents and creating healthy communities for them, has conducted numerous studies to support their claims. Their vision is “to create a world where all young people are valued and thrive” (Search Institute: Discovering what Kids Need to Succeed, 2011). To this end, the Institute created and “premiered the concept of Developmental Assets—building blocks of positive development crucial for
advancing academic success, civic engagement, and the reduction of risk behaviors” (Search Institute: Discovering what Kids Need to Succeed, 2011). The assets provide a comprehensive framework of what young people need to thrive.

**Developmental Assets**

Developmental assets are often referred to as “building blocks of healthy development” for children and adolescents. Consistent with developmental theory, the Search Institute has created four distinct lists (of which I have included the two that are relevant to my research interests) of the 40 developmental assets for: (a) early childhood, ages 3-5, Appendix B; (b) K–3, ages 5-9, Appendix B; (c) middle childhood, ages 8-12; and (d) adolescents, ages 12-18. Each list is divided into 2 major categories: external and internal. The external assets are further subdivided into support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. The internal assets have four subcategories, as well: commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Collectively these are designed to describe what is necessary to help our youth grow up to be healthy, caring, and responsible citizens.

In 1990, through a Search Institute report titled *The Troubled Journey: A Portrait of 6th–12th Grade Youth* the first list was presented outlining 30 assets. Since that time, the institute has engaged in ongoing studies to review the current research, as well as conduct their own research, creating large data sets based on self-report surveys completed by youth. In addition, the Search Institute utilized qualitative methodology to better understand the developmental realities of youth of color and other youth in distressed communities. In 1996, the outcome of this work was a revision that added 10
more assets and separate lists for each stage of development. Because of its basis in youth
development, resiliency, and prevention and research to support its effectiveness, the
Developmental Assets framework is widely used in numerous schools, religious
organizations, and communities throughout our country (Search Institute: Discovering
what Kids Need to Succeed, 2011).

*Putting Children First*, a longitudinal study from 1997-2001 of the youth in St.
Louis Park, Minnesota was of particular interest to me because of the researchers’
underlying assumptions. According to Roehlkepartain, Benson, and Sesma (2003) the
study did not seek new funding or new programming, but relied on the human resources
that existed in the community’s institutions, residents, and leaders. In addition, the study
focused on youth from birth to 21, not limiting it to only children or adolescents. And
instead of focusing on at-risk behaviors, it emphasized building the assets that increase
the likelihood that young people will thrive, make healthy choices and be resilient in the
face of challenges. And lastly, the study aimed to engage all residents in the
responsibility of raising healthy children and teenagers.

Although the *Putting Children First* initiative cannot be generalized to all
communities, the key findings are listed below. In 2001, the average St. Louis Park
student reported having 20.4 of the 40 developmental assets.

1. Different young people experience different patterns of developmental assets. For
example, females, on average, experience more assets than males. Further,
younger youth tend to experience more assets than older youth.
2. While there are some slight differences in overall levels of assets when comparing youth from different family backgrounds, racial/ethnic backgrounds, and family income levels, what is most striking is that these differences are not as profound as one might presume.

3. Thus, all groups of young people—regardless of background—struggle with not experiencing enough of the assets. Yet these building blocks of healthy development can be available to young people from all backgrounds. We know this because some youth in St. Louis Park across all of these demographic differences experience high levels of developmental assets (31–40 assets) (Roehlkepartain et al., 2003, p.15)

These findings, although specific to one community and its youth, can provide useful information for this study.

Service-Learning

*Isn’t This Just Community Service?*

Historically, the terms service-learning and community service have not been well defined in the literature or in practice and, in fact, were often used interchangeably. Interest in these areas has grown steadily over the years from both a political perspective and an educational one. Toward the end of the last century, President George Bush signed into law The National and Community Service Act of 1990 to provide funding for K-16 community service initiatives. More recently, President Barack Obama signed the bipartisan Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act in 2009, which increased the AmeriCorps programs to reinvigorate volunteerism (National Service Timeline, 2011).
Simultaneously, educators were advocating for utilizing service projects as a method of experiential learning where students can interact with their environment. Also, from the educational perspective, service-learning caught the attention of those interested in school reform. Service was seen as a vehicle to meet the basic academic and social-emotional needs of our future citizens. In response to this interest, scholars began to seek clarification on service related terminology and definitions (Furco, 1996; Itin, 1999).

In the early 1990’s Robert Sigmon developed a typology to distinguish among service programs. He looked at two components of the projects. Who is the intended beneficiary of the service and what is the intended focus of the service? Is it service itself or the learning aspect that comes from the service? Each of these two components can be viewed on individual, but parallel continuums. On the “beneficiary” continuum the recipient is on one end and the provider on the other. On the “focus” continuum, service is on one end and learning is on the other as illustrated in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>BENEFICIARY</th>
<th>Provider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>FOCUS</td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Distinguishing Among Service Program (Sigmon, 1997)
Below is another helpful visual from Sigmon’s (1997) work that he called a Service and Learning Typology (Figure 3). This illustrates for each experience where the emphasis is placed, on the service or the learning. Beneath each type is an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service-LEARNING: (i.e. internships/ field education)</th>
<th>Learning goals primary; service outcomes secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SERVICE-learning: (i.e. volunteerism/community service)</td>
<td>Service outcomes primary; learning goals secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service-learning:</td>
<td>Service and learning goals completely separate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERVICE-LEARNING: (service-learning)</td>
<td>Service and learning goals of equal weight and each enhances the other for all participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: A Service and Learning Typology (Sigmon, 1997)

Defining service-learning and community service in the context of Sigmon’s (1997) typology, service-learning is viewed as an activity that affords equal benefit to both the provider and the recipient and focuses equally on learning to the students and service to the community. In contrast, community service is more heavily weighted on the benefits of the recipient with the focus on the community. This is not to imply that there are no benefits to the students and learning does not takes place; rather this is to say that those aspects would be serendipitous and not by design. For this reason, it is believed that service-learning has many advantages that do not exist in a community service experience (Billig, 2011).

Dr. Shelley Billig of the RMC Research Corporation provides one definition of service-learning as a teaching and learning method where students provide service to the
Community. The service should meet an authentic need that exists and should be linked to the school curriculum. Service-learning projects involve young people in planning, implementing, reflecting on, and celebrating the success of the initiative.

Community service can be viewed in one of two ways. Some think of it as work performed by law offenders in lieu of a harsher penalty. In this, it is a volunteer activity in which individuals or groups such as schools, religious organizations, after school programs, or scouts engage to provide a benefit to the community. Since the focus of this research is on service-learning, it is helpful to look a little deeper at the many ways it is used in the literature.

**Defining Service-Learning**

Service-learning is defined both in the literature and by practitioners in a multitude of ways. What follows are some of the most commonly accepted definitions in the field. Although they reflect different philosophical viewpoints, there are many common themes that link one to the other.

CNCS, a federal agency which oversees Learn and Serve America which provides direct and indirect support to K-12 schools, community groups and higher education institutions to facilitate service-learning projects, defines service-learning as a

…unique opportunity for America's young people -- from kindergarten to college students -- to get involved with their communities in a tangible way by integrating service projects with classroom learning. Service-learning engages students in the educational process, using what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems. Students not only learn about democracy and citizenship, they become
actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform.

Service-learning can be applied across all subjects and grade levels; it can involve a single student or group of students, a classroom or an entire school. Students build character and become active participants as they work with others in their school and community to create service projects in areas like education, public safety, and the environment (Corporation for National Community Service, 2011).

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation commissioned a retrospective study of a variety of K-12 projects that they funded in the last decade of the 20th century. According to Dr. Shelley Billig of the RMC Research Corporation, who conducted this study, service-learning is

…a teaching and learning method in which K-12 students engage in community service as a means of learning important academic subject matter. The community service provided by the students typically meets an authentic community need and should be closely tied to school curriculum. Most service-learning projects involve young people in planning, service to community, reflection, and celebration (McHugh, 2004, p. 1).

Janet Eyler, Ph.D. and Dwight E. Giles, Ph.D. (1999) who focus their research primarily on higher education define service-learning as

…a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students work with others through a process of applying what they are learning to community problems and, at the same time, reflecting
upon their experience as they seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves (McHugh, 2004, p.2)

According to the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (2011) “service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.” And lastly, according to Barbara Jacoby (1996) “service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning” (p. 5).

Reflecting on each of these definitions, there are essentially five overlapping themes. Dr. Jennifer Gildbride-Brown (personal communication, January 10, 2010) identified four of these characteristics as service-learning: (a) models good practice with an emphasis on collaboration, reciprocity, and commitment, (b) promotes reflective thinking, (c) increases self-knowledge, cognitive complexity, knowledge of diverse others and communities, and (d) deepens commitments to the “common good” which seeks a more just, equitable world. The fifth and probably the most critical factor for distinguishing service-learning from community service or volunteering is the intentional link of the activity to the curriculum in order to obtain learning outcomes.

_Service-Learning’s History_

In order to fully appreciate the role and impact of service-learning in education, one must understand some of the seminal legislative events in its development. Service-
learning has its roots in the early part of the 20th century, when American philosopher John Dewey developed the intellectual foundations for service-based learning, which as Leonard Carmichael said in his introduction to Dewey’s (1956) works, emphasized “the advocacy of the child-centered school and of the school that gave full emphasis to real interests and to learn through doing.”

In the first part of the 1900’s the political landscape was primarily focused on community service for adults and the role of national service. As early as the 1930’s President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to “provide opportunities for millions of young men to help restore the nation’s parks, revitalize the economy, and support their families and themselves” (Steinberg, Bringle, & Williams, 2010, p. 2). A decade later in 1944, the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (known today as the GI Bill) was created to connect service and education, in essence providing Americans educational opportunities in return for service to their country. Then in 1961, Congress authorized the establishment of the Peace Corps, which had been proposed by President John F. Kennedy. In the 1970’s, the focus was on community service specifically for older adults as illustrated by authorization of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, which established the Foster Grandparent Program, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, and the Senior Companion Program. The mid- to late-1980’s were characterized as an “Era of Student Volunteerism” (Hollander & Meeropol, 2006) advancing civic engagement for young adults with the expansion of community service to many of our nation’s colleges and universities. Although a
smatteri

The two most significant events that advanced the service-learning movement in K-16 education took place in the last decade of the century. First, in 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed the National and Community Service Act that provided for the legislation that authorized grants for national service programs to youth, nonprofits, colleges, and universities. Learn and Serve America, which was established under this act (formerly known as Serve America) is currently providing limited funds due to many budget cuts in government organizations. Later, President William J. Clinton provided increased opportunities for Americans to serve their communities when he signed the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, which created the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and AmeriCorps. The formation of this federal agency is currently the pillar of the service-learning movement in the current millennium.

According to its website, CNCS “engages more than five million Americans in service through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America, and leads President Obama's national call to service initiative, United We Serve” (National Service Timeline, 2011). I think that the overall historical trend would reflect a shift from providing opportunities for adults to encouraging service-learning for our nation’s youth. Hence, we have the birth of service-learning as we know it today.

The Components of High Quality Service-Learning

Before the turn of the century, “high quality” service-learning was based on the National Service-Learning Cooperative’s Essential Elements of Service-Learning.
However, researchers who were testing these indicators of quality discovered that while “the Essential Elements as a group continued to predict overall outcomes, many of the single Elements did not” (Billig, 2009, p 132). In the meantime, there was also a growing demand from teachers and administrators who were experiencing a shift in education of “teaching to the standards” as the major force behind their instructional decision-making. There were others who believed that having standards and indicators would provide more credibility to the field of service-learning. It was the cumulative effect of these factors that contributed to the need to develop new standards and indicators for the field of service-learning.

Through the leadership of the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) and support from State Farm Companies Foundation, the standards-setting process began. Many experts engaged in a rigorous process of synthesizing the research into a form that could be easily understood. This information was used by a group of service-learning experts to write the first draft of the standards and indicators. Then a reactor panel process, a very complex and thorough set of procedures was implemented in 27 states to rework and refine the initial draft. According to Billig, Moely, and Holland (2009) the last step of the process was that the results from the final panel were used to ensure fidelity in the research and finalize the language for clarity and internal consistency. The eight new standards and corresponding indicators (Appendix A) were first made public at the National Service-Learning Conference in April of 2008.

As my literature review commenced and I read study after study, I used the NYLC’s standards and indicators as a yardstick to measure their quality. It was both
surprising and disappointing to discover that many of the service-learning experiences that have been studied do not incorporate all the facets of a high-quality program. Therefore, in my research it will be essential that the experiences I include will meet the NYLC standards.

Service-Learning as Pedagogy in the Elementary School

Service-learning, a type of experiential education, is described by Furco (1996) as a rich, innovative pedagogical approach for more effective teaching and learning. Unlike internships, community service, and field education, service-learning must benefit both the student and the recipient of the service ensuring an equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring. Therefore, this pedagogy appeals to educators who embrace experiences that enhance learning while engaging students in important activities (Freeman & King, 2001).

The underlying principles of this pedagogy are based on the work of John Dewey. According to Saltmarsh (1996) service-learning links education to experience while providing authentic experiences for students to live within a democratic community. In addition, a hallmark of this pedagogy requires reflective thinking on the experience and provides opportunity for social service leading to social transformation (Saltmarsh, 1996). Dewey (1938) did not use the term service-learning, but his belief that the teacher and students engage in a purposeful experience that educates the “whole” child and prepares them for participation in a democratic society is reflected in the current application of this pedagogy.
Although my interest is in elementary age children, I think it is worth noting one interesting finding of Furco’s (2002) study. He conducted a quasi-experimental study to look specifically at the outcomes of 529 high school students in California who participated either in community service, service-learning, or service-based internships. Both his qualitative and quantitative data suggested that “service-programs, regardless of type, all contain some characteristics that enhance students’ development across the six educational domains [academic, career, personal, social, civic, and ethical]” (p. 42). Some service-learning advocates might be disappointed that their pedagogy did not distinguish itself from the others, but it is encouraging that the research confirms that authentic learning that is experiential in nature has positive outcomes for its participants. Researching how young children benefit from these kinds of opportunities is the crux of this study. In the next section, I will explore the positive outcomes of participating in service-learning.

Outcomes of Service-Learning

Because early childhood educators have been slow to recognize the benefits of service-learning to young children (Freeman & King, 2001; Noddings, 2005), there are few evidence-based studies available on the outcomes of these initiatives. However, there are several anecdotal reports in the literature (Freeman & King, 2011; Wade, 2009). Therefore, I will present the information I found, but also report on some of the results for older students as a way to explore possible topics of research for elementary students. I suspect that educators and counselors may be missing out on valuable teachable moments and developmentally opportune times by not providing service-learning.
experiences for young children. My premise is if the research can document positive outcomes with adolescents and college students, what might be the possible outcomes for children whose social, emotional, moral, and academic development are still unfolding? For the artist, it is easier to sculpt a work of art while the clay is soft and malleable, not after it has baked in the kiln. Perhaps by providing service-learning experiences for K-5 children who are “works in progress,” we may have a positive impact on their academic, career, personal, social, civic, and ethical development (Wade, 2009).

Gelman, Furco, Holland, and Bringle (2005) delivered a paper at the 5th International Service-Learning research Conference entitled Beyond Anecdote: Challenges in Bringing Rigor to Service-Learning Research. They noted that many of the studies that have been conducted are self-studies by advocates of service-learning and are often commissioned by funders who have their own agendas. Gelman et al. (2005) also noted that there are limited numbers of longitudinal studies which unfortunately may be further limited by budgetary constraints in the current economy.

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2002) has a commitment to philanthropy, particular in the area of service-learning. From 1990-2000, they helped fund approximately 30 projects related to K-12 service-learning. Using a combination of secondary analysis of existing documents, interviews, and Web site analysis, RMC Research collected and analyzed data to accomplish the purpose of the evaluation….grantees were invited to a convening to discuss their grant activities, the collective impact the grants had on the field of service-learning, and the lessons learned during grant implementation. Those who attended the convening elucidated field-building
strategies and contributions and validated the results and impacts reflected in this report.

The report was revised to incorporate insights from the convening.

The evaluation had several important limitations. Existing data were of variable quality. Memories of the grantees being interviewed were sometimes faulty. Grantees did not have shared goals, shared timelines, or standardized reports, making aggregation of results more difficult and less trustworthy. To assist in determining validity, grantees reviewed and offered feedback on earlier versions of this report and helped to develop its conclusions.

The results of their study reflected that participants:

- Feel needed and useful
- Learn the importance of giving back to their communities
- Gain a sense of belonging
- Increase community participation through volunteerism, career exploration, and democratic activity
- Advance social skills and improve community-youth relationships
- Build ownership and pride in the community
- Decrease negative behavior
- Gain leadership, organizational, and personal development skills
- Gain community development skills and learn fund development
- Enhance skills in conflict resolution, teambuilding, and communication
- Recognize their own talents and abilities, thus increasing self-esteem (Growing Together, Partnerships Make a Difference, 2011, p. 15).
Over the years, the state of Ohio has focused a great deal of attention on service-learning and its use as a strategy for school improvement. To assist educators, The Ohio Department of Education’s (ODE) provides the Community Service-learning (CSL) Program to help in the planning of creative classroom projects that take place in community service environments. The ODE website claims that the Ohio academic content standards lay the foundation for community service-learning by providing students with activities that meet community needs while promoting creativity, leadership, problem-solving skills and academic content. These skills and subject knowledge are outcomes from participating in service-learning that is often documented in the literature (Astin et al., 2000; Itin, 1999).

Although cyber-bullying and face-to-face bullying seems to have overshadowed school violence in the popular press, violence in our schools is still a significant problem. There have been studies done to investigate the impact of service-learning on violence prevention. Recent research in the field of social emotional learning supports civic engagement as an effective vehicle for countering youth violence. Studies conducted by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) suggest that youth who participate in service-learning exhibit lower levels of violent behavior and better academic performance, as a result of the social structure and emotional support provided by these activities.

Because the majority of the outcomes research is with college students, I looked at several survey studies conducted by Eyler and Giles (1999). Their results can provide some insights in potential research studies with younger children. Eyler and Giles (1999)
reported that the results were statistically significant at .05 level or higher. The major outcomes they found with respect to stereotyping and tolerance, personal development, interpersonal development, and community and college connection for their participants were (a) more positive view of people with whom they work, (b) growing appreciation for difference: seeing similarities through differences, (c) increased capacity for tolerance, (d) greater self-knowledge, spiritual growth, reward in helping others, (d) increased personal efficacy, increased relationship between service-learning and career skill development, (e) increased ability to work well with others, (f) increased leadership skills, (g) increase connectedness to community, (h) development of connectedness with peers, and (i) increased closeness of faculty-student relationships. One important caveat that Eyler and Giles (1999) emphasize is that to obtain any of these outcomes, the design of the experience must be of the highest quality.

Service-learning is an educational activity used in K-16 settings designed to integrate projects that meet a community need with classroom learning. To achieve the outcomes discussed in the research, these experiences must meet the standards for quality practice developed by the National Youth Leadership Council which include the strongest evidence-based elements of effective practice. In addition, reviewing the literature on this topic has verified for me that there is a paucity of studies regarding young children and service-learning. It is the goal of this research to make a contribution to the fields of both counseling and education.
How Does Service-Learning Enhance Asset Building?

Building and enhancing assets in our youth requires educators, counselors, and scholars to examine ways to best accomplish this task. Based on my literature review of experiential education, I believe that one effective way is through high-quality service-learning opportunities. Reviewing the literature on the outcomes for young children engaging in service or community service was rather challenging. The older the participants, the more studies that are available. For instance, in the field of higher education, there is an abundance of literature about college students’ experiences in community service and service-learning in the context of civic engagement and social justice (Butin, 2005; Cipole, 2010; Jacoby, 2009). By contrast, the number of studies decreases with younger participants. There is clearly an identifiable gap in the literature of high quality research for the primary grades.

Dr. Kieslsmeier (2011), the founder of the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) and the Center for Experiential Education and Service-Learning, suggests that service-learning is an essential instructional strategy that empowers youth, encourages creative and critical thinking, builds community partnerships, and helps teachers effectively educate young people. This statement is supported by both quantitative and qualitative research.

Freeman and King (2001) described an intergenerational service-learning project that included pre-school children, at-risk fifth graders, and senior citizens. They reported many positive outcomes for the children including developing and using newly acquired literacy skills; social and emotional growth through in-depth reflection and opportunities
to practice prosocial behaviors such as caring, empathy, altruism, helping, and sharing; and increased self-efficacy and emerging independence.

In another study, Stott and Jackson (2005) discussed The Alliance for Children: Collaborative Exceptional Peer Tutors (ACCEPT) service-learning initiative designed by a middle school counselor and an elementary school teacher. Each semester, 12 to 16 middle school students received classroom instruction on academic, personal, social, and career content. After learning the concepts, the participants had the opportunity to teach a similar curriculum to the younger children at a neighboring elementary school visiting kindergarten and third-grade classes on a weekly basis. The ACCEPT class utilized a variety of instructional methods including puppets, magic, drama, origami, art, filmmaking, cooperative games, puzzles, and outdoor activities with a reading component in each lesson. At the conclusion of each week, the middle school students reflected on what they had learned in the class and on-site through discussion, assignments, and journal writing.

At the outset of this experience, the counselor selected the participants based on their interest in a helping profession or at-risk behavior. In the following years, the class was open to all middle school students. To be considered for selection, students completed an application that included teacher recommendations and parental permission. According to Stott and Jackson (2005) since this program began, more than 180 middle school students have participated, working with more than 650 elementary school students.
To assess the impact of this program, data was collected in a series of individual and semi-structured interviews of former students, parents, and teachers who participated in the program from 1998 to 2004 through a qualitative phenomenological study. The results confirmed that the students met the comprehensive guidance program goals in the areas of personal awareness, social and learning skills, career interests, and character education (Stott & Jackson, 2005).

As I reviewed the literature to gain a better understanding of the developmental assets, I uncovered a significant number of articles referenced character education (Berkowitz & Bier, 2006). I think it is worth taking a cursory look at character education because of its relationship to the developmental assets. According to their website, Character Education Partnership is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, and nonsectarian organization that supports and promotes social, emotional, and ethical development in youth (Leading a National Call to Character, 2010). Character education can be defined as the intentional endeavor by schools, families, and communities to help young people comprehend, care about, make choices, and behave in ways that reflect core ethical values. These core values provide a foundation for the kinds of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that schools regard as worthy and are therefore dedicated to include in their curriculum.

In another study, Berkowitz and Bier’s (2006) report for policymakers and opinions leaders asserts that character education (a) stimulates the development of social and moral thinking, (b) improves problem solving skills, general school behavior, knowledge about and attitudes toward risky behaviors, (c) reduces drugs and alcohol use,
violence and aggression, general misbehavior, (d) fosters emotional competency, (e) increases academic achievement and knowledge about character, (f) builds attachment to school, and (g) promotes personal morality. Moreover, a national study by Lickona and Davidson (2005) of 24 diverse high schools concluded that there is agreement regarding the call for “good” character- working hard, doing the right thing, and living a meaningful life.

Interestingly, they provide a dual concept of character education. “Performance character” is about the qualities necessary to reach one’s potential in multiple contexts, such as work or school, and “moral character” focuses on the qualities necessary for successful interpersonal relationships and ethical behavior (Lickona & Davidson, 2005).

A recent three-year, quasi-experimental study of middle and high school students in the School District of Philadelphia using matched comparison classrooms and pre-post assessments was conducted to measure program outcomes of Philadelphia Partnership in Character Education (2PCE) program. A multi-method, multi-site evaluation gathered both quantitative and qualitative information with the objective of yielding evidence-based research on the impact of the program, and formative evaluation information to highlight successes and areas for improvement. This study (Billig, Jesse, & Grimley, 2008) revealed some important findings. The students reported experiencing increased physical and psychological safety (positive peer group interactions and decrease in confrontations); supportive relationships (which included connectedness, caring, responsiveness, good communication, and support); opportunities to belong (supporting cultural identity formation and competence); positive social norms (which included clear
rules for behavior and responsibilities for service); support for efficacy and mattering (which included practices to build empowerment, personal responsibility and meaningful challenges); and opportunities for skill building in the physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social domains; and the collaboration of family, school, and community efforts.

Table 4 illustrates the alignment of features present in activities that promote positive youth development (PYD), such as high quality service-learning with the 40 Developmental Assets. To this end, it is evident that properly planned and implemented service-learning initiatives can provide authentic opportunities for children to develop new or enhance existing assets.
|---|---|
| Physical and psychological safety | Peaceful conflict resolution  
Resistance skills  
Healthy lifestyle\(^1\)  
Caring school Climate  
Safety |
| Appropriate structure | Child programs  
Family boundaries  
School boundaries  
Neighborhood boundaries |
| Supportive relationships | Time at home  
Religious community  
Family Support  
Positive peer influence  
Positive family communication |
| Positive social norms | Equality and social justice  
Service to others |
| Support for efficacy and mattering | Positive view of personal future  
Sense of purpose  
Self-esteem  
Personal power |
| Opportunities for skill building | Interpersonal competence  
Planning and decision making  
Responsibility  
Honest  
Integrity  
Homework  
Reading for pleasure  
Learning engagement  
Creative activities  
Achievement motivation  
Self-regulation\(^2\) |
| Integration of family, school, and community efforts | Bonding to school  
Parent Involvement in schooling  
Other Adult relationships  
Community values youth  
Children as resources  
High expectations |
| Opportunities to belong | Cultural competence |

Table 4: Using High-Quality Servicer-Learning to Enhance the Developmental Assets

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\(^1\) This asset is on the Middle Childhood list only

\(^2\) This asset is in the Grades K-3 list only
Of all the outcomes that have been identified through my literature review, I am most interested in studying prosocial behaviors. This heightened awareness was sparked by the simple, yet poignant, conclusion to Freeman and King’s (2001) article. Interest in helping young children learn to care for others in not new, but children need the support of teachers and other committed adults to develop prosocial attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Service-learning activities are well-suited to fill these roles. It is a pedagogy that deserves increased consideration by teachers of young children who value the prosocial behaviors that are the bedrock of our democracy. Though Freeman and King (2001) were speaking specifically to teachers, and perhaps parents, I see counselors as playing a very important role in this process, as well.

Progressive Education

Trends in education have historically evolved as a reaction to political and social events in a given time frame. Progressive education is no different. During the first half of the 20th century, the term “progressive education” was used to describe an educational movement based on ideas and practices aimed to make schools more effective agents of a democratic society. It arose in response to industrialism from the latter half of the previous century. According to Lawrence Cremin (1961), “progressive education began as part of a vast humanitarian effort to apply the promise of American life…a many-sided effort to use the schools to improve the lives of individuals” (p. viii).

This movement was defined and implemented by practitioners in many different ways. In fact, in the preface of Cremin’s (1961) book, The Transformation of the School, he stated:
The readers will search these pages in vain for any capsule definition of progressive education. None exists, and none ever will: for throughout its history progressive education, meant different things to different people, and these differences were only compounded by the remarkable diversity of American education (p. x).

However, as Eirich (2006) clarified in her dissertation about the experience of morning meetings in a progressive classroom, progressive educators are bound by the philosophy that democracy means active participation by all citizens in social, political, and economic decisions that will affect our lives. At a time in our history where corporate and private wealth was having an adverse social and political impact, John Dewey (1916), in particular, saw that with the “decline of local community life and small scale enterprise, young people were losing valuable opportunities to learn the values of democratic participation, and he concluded that education would need to make up for this loss” (Eirich, 2006, p. 4).

In day-to-day experience, progressive educators encouraged creativity, curiosity, and inventive thinking. Teachers promoted inquiry-based learning and hands-on experiences within an inclusive democratic community. According to Engle (2005) the values behind progressive education were the “arts and creative effort, trust in the implicit interest of the man-made and natural worlds, respect for children’s autonomy, and belief in children’s serious mindedness and serious intent” (p. 11).

The progressive movement as it was originally envisioned officially “died” in 1955 with end of the Progressive Education Association and the passing of its journal,
Progressive Education, two years later (Cremin, 1961). However, many educators dedicated to the values and passionate about the principles of this movement continued to find ways to implement this agenda in their classrooms.

Although the nature of this study does not necessitate an accounting of the progressive programs that continued after the 1950s, one event that is worth noting is the creation of the North Dakota Study Group (NDSG). In 1972, Vito Perrone, “a leading advocate for humanistic, regimentation-free public education and a mentor to several generations of liberal reformers who fought the tide of standardized testing” (Vitello, p. B) convened this group consisting of seventeen educators. The impetus for this meeting was to address the topic of assessing student achievement. According to Engle “those individuals were asked to meet because of their common interest in equal access to good schooling- good in this case loosely defined as child-centered, John Dewey-influenced, progressive practice.” At that time, standardized tests with multiple-choice questions was the favored approach to assessment. This approach “not only served to effectively define the curriculum- the lessons to be learned- but also discounted much of the agenda of the more progressive programs” (Engle, 2005). This event, which has evolved into annual meetings dedicated to deepening and broadening the national dialogue on education, and many that have followed have kept conversations about and practice of the progressive movement alive.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine how service-learning may provide authentic experiences to support the development of prosocial skills in elementary-aged school children. For this chapter, I include the following: (a) theoretical perspectives that frame the study, (b) research questions that guided the study, (c) description of the research site, its participants, and the service-learning initiative, (d) discussion of research methods and procedures for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reflection of my role as the researcher.

Purpose of the Study

The 40 developmental assets are often seen as building blocks for healthy development for children and adolescents (Search Institute, 2011). Collectively, the developmental assets are designed to describe what is necessary to help youth become healthy, caring, and responsible citizens. What do researchers and practitioners mean when they say “caring?” How does one define caring? How do children learn to become caring? In what ways are schools responsible for helping to develop caring citizens? Interestingly, one of the assets that appear on all four of the list of developmental assets is “caring.” Below is a description, taken verbatim from the Search Institute’s (2011) website, describing this internal asset for each developmental stage:
1. Early Childhood (3-5): The child begins to show empathy, understanding, and awareness of others’ feelings.

2. Grades K-3 (5-9): Parent(s) help child grow in empathy, understanding, and helping others.

3. Middle Childhood (8-12): Parent(s) tell the child it is important to help other people.

4. Adolescents (12-18): Young Person places high value on helping other people.

According to Kevin Swick (2001), an Early Childhood Education professor at the University of South Carolina and the director of the Service-Learning and Teacher Education Project, the process of caring is learned early in life. In his article on nurturing decency during the early childhood years, Swick (2001) presented what he called the *caring/serving paradigm*. “Serving is the primary means that people use to create a framework for open, nurturing, meaningful relationships” (Swick, 2001, p. 132). This concept supports service-learning as a vehicle for social development. Barbara Jacoby (1996) states “service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning” (p. 5).

Recognizing this connection between “caring and serving,” the purpose of my study was to examine the ways in which elementary-aged children learn and show how to care for others using a high-quality, service-learning experience (e.g., Pencil Project). After
conducting an extensive literature review, it became clear to me that the construct of prosocial behavior, not just caring, was what I was interested in studying. As a progressive educator/counselor, I became increasingly more interested in what kinds of authentic experiences could children engage in to develop these skills. Because there are few studies about young children engaging in service-learning, this research has the potential to contribute to the sparse literature. In addition, this study may provide elementary school counselors with new insights about nurturing the development of caring youth.

**School Setting**

I selected the Burton Progressive School (i.e., the researcher-selected pseudonym for the actual school) as the setting for my study. According to the Ohio Department of Education, BPS’s designation is “Excellence with Distinction,” meaning that the school met the state requirement for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (ODE, 2011). The demographic composition of the school comprised 89.6% white, non-Hispanic, 1.4% economically disadvantaged, and 8.8% of the students have disabilities (ODE, 2011).

Backyard research (e.g., doing research in a familiar setting) as described by Glesne (2006) provided me with easy access to the participants because I have been employed at the school for many years. Additionally, I have a pre-established rapport with the adults and children at the school site. However, Glesne (2006) is quick to note the limitations of backyard research. Previous experiences with settings and people can set up expectations for certain types of interactions that may constrain effective data collection. When you enter an unfamiliar setting, your only role is that of researcher.
However, when studying in your own backyard, your role is already established. Therefore, adding on the role of researcher may create confusion for you or your participants.

I conducted my research with fifth grade students who planned and implemented The Pencil Project, when they were in third grade. Mrs. Academy (pseudonym), their classroom teacher, was both willing and eager to have this service-learning initiative and its outcomes for the children studied. In addition, the participants’ parents, BPS’s principal, and the school’s 21st century coach were willing participants.

The Burton Progressive School is a K-5 progressive elementary school in a Midwest suburb. In 2006-2007, it became a “community school,” after applying for and receiving a $50,000 Community School Grant from the Ohio Department of Education. In the state of Ohio, community schools are required to have a “sponsor” to oversee their operations. Since the district in which the Burton School is located agreed to assume this role, BPS has the same operating standards as the other schools in this public school district. More importantly, it is guided by the following Foundational Principles of Progressive Education. A major premise is that school is essential to a democratic society. Therefore, the school personnel believe the following:

1. We structure experiences that actively engage the child in producing rather than solely consuming knowledge.

2. We integrate thematic units of study and foster authentic learning opportunities.

3. We provide opportunities for the arts to occupy an integrated place in the curriculum as an essential way to acquire and express knowledge.
4. Teachers and children use time and space in a flexible manner.

5. We respect diversity among children and variation in their development.

6. We collaborate with parents as co-educators in meeting children’s needs.

7. Teachers raise children's social consciousness by encouraging them to examine and confront complex issues within society.

8. We value ongoing reflection and self-evaluation by children and adults.

9. We guide child-choice and decision-making.

10. We view our school as a center for teaching and learning for all ages. (BPS Staff Handbook, 2013).

The Pencil Project

The following is an excerpt from a manuscript submitted to the International Journal of Progressive Education (IJPE) that describes the Pencil Project, the service-learning initiative in which this study is situated:

What happens when a teacher carefully listens to her students for opportunities to follow their interests and capitalize on the promise of an authentic learning experience?

In [Mrs. Academy’s] third grade classroom, children’s dissatisfaction with the pencils received as part of the school supply sale resulted in authentic learning about economics, mathematics, persuasive writing and how to go about affecting change.

Early in the year, students were noticing a number of problems with their new pencils from the manufacturing company [name omitted for confidentiality]. Students began to share things like: “The lead breaks and falls off while people are writing and when you have the pencil and it falls, it cracks open. The pencils are hard to sharpen, and when you’re erasing with these pencils, erasers just snap off.”

Observing their frustration, [Mrs. Academy] wondered aloud with them regarding what they might be able to do about these problems. Students decided to survey other
third/fourth and fifth graders in the school and found that most of the classes were similarly dissatisfied overall with their recently purchased school store pencils.

They decided to write a business letter to the president of the [manufacturing company]. Before doing so, they found and watched a video produced by [the company] about how to make pencils. When questioned about their work after the study was over, one student shared that “We wanted to learn about how they make pencils to see if we could figure out what they were doing wrong.” The business letter was sent and classroom life resumed.

Thinking they would hear back from the [company’s] president “in three weeks maximum”, another frustration began to gradually set in. One student complained, “We’ve waited forty days!” while another classmate sighed, “We’ve almost forgotten about the pencil company.” Then, after eight weeks, students were met with an unexpected surprise. As one student said, “We thought it was a normal day when we walked into the room. Then we sat on the rug and Mrs. Academy said there were boxes waiting for us downstairs.” [The company] had sent 1,440 pencils in response to the student letter. [Mrs. Academy] had received a phone call from [the company] and learned they had moved the factory and had made some personnel changes. The third graders were thrilled and in written reflections made comments like: “We were so happy! They were amazing pencils! When we put them in the pencil basket, they overflowed! We loved our new pencils.”

When Mrs. Academy’s third graders delivered the new pencils to the other classrooms they had surveyed, they found that “It was fun handing out the new pencils because everyone was surprised. Handing out the pencils turned out to be a big success!”

As students reflected on the learning experience in the digital learning story they later wrote and produced, their thinking went beyond what they had learned in the traditional content-sense. One girl shared how she “had become angry because the old pencils had broken and wouldn’t sharpen” and another felt “super happy because I was helping other people.” Others remarked that what they learned was “if you have a problem, fix it!”

Finally, the learning story ends with these words from yet another student: “I was surprised that a world-wide company would respond to a third grade class from [a Midwestern city]. I learned that even though you are young, you can still change many things.”

*The Pencil Project* is an example of the depth of learning that can occur when teachers carefully listen and pay attention to what their children are saying, thinking about, and doing. It also illuminates many of the Foundational Principles that serve to ground our work with children. Referring to these principles, Mrs. Academy carefully
“guided child-choice and decision-making,” noticing their concerns and asking the questions that drove the emergent project. She also skillfully “raised their social consciousness by having them confront the issue” they were facing and helped them find a civil and effective way to go about having it addressed.

Other principles including “the flexible use of time and space” (this learning did not occur in 45 minute blocks at the same time every day and in fact took place over several months) and “valuing reflection and self-evaluation by the children” were also important aspects of The Pencil Problem (Burton, Collaros, & Eirich, 2013).

As a researcher interested in studying prosocial skill development in young children, I saw this project as an opportunity to explore the students’ learning outside of the academic outcomes shared in this story. Although Burton, Collaros, and Eirich (2013) acknowledged and identified learning beyond traditional content areas, I was eager to dig deeper into the social/emotional experiences of these third graders from this emergent service-learning initiative.

Research Questions

My research questions focus on the following:

1. How do children and adults understand and describe the progressive school philosophy and approach to learning?

2. In what ways did the Pencil Project promote prosocial skills among children at a progressive school?

3. In what ways did the children demonstrate and utilize the learned prosocial skills in the classroom and beyond?

Theoretical Framework

There are many different ways to think about human learning. The lens through which I will do my study is sociocultural theory (SCT). SCT posits that higher-level
human cognition in the individual has its origins in social life, reflecting the interconnectedness of the cognitive and the social. In my research, I examined the development of prosocial skills in elementary school children.

Sociocultural theory developed in response to the theories that preceded it. Since the work of Skinner, Bandura, and Piaget, early child development and socialization has changed conceptually over the years. The disciplines of psychology, sociology, and anthropology have taken a closer look at children’s agency in the socialization process, the importance of social context, children’s experiences beyond their early years in the family particularly their interactions and experiences with peers. “There is a recognition that children both affect and are affected by society and culture” (Corsaro & Fingerson, 2003, p. 125). According to Rogoff (1990) and Wertsch (1998) as cited by (Corsaro & Fingerson, 2003, p. 127) “sociocultural theorists refine and extend central concepts in the work of Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky.”

Tappan (2006) proposed that understanding moral development in the context of a sociocultural perspective begins with three assertions that describe Vygotsky’s theory:

1. The claim that higher mental functions (mental functions, like decision making, problem solving, deliberate memory, that are not biologically or instinctually motivated) can only be understood when one analyzes and interprets them genetically or developmentally;

2. The claim that higher mental functioning is mediated by words, language, and forms of discourse, which function as “psychological tools” that both facilitate and transform mental action; and
3. The claim that forms of higher mental functioning have their own origins in social relations, as “intermental” processes between persons are internalized to become “intramental” processes within a person (pp. 353-354)

Vygotsky’s theoretical perspective focuses on how the mind uses physical (technical) and psychological (language) “tools” to organize and understand experiences. In the context of moral development, problems or events “get talked about” and transformed into something that “matters” and ultimately becomes one’s inner-narrative. Based on this notion, it is my premise that from service-learning initiatives, children engage in prosocial behaviors through the activity itself, but it is the language about that activity that is internalized as a code of morality. The mechanism at work is the planning, implementation, reflection, and celebration of the service-learning, which is processed through the use of language, constructing meaning from the experience which becomes the narrative upon which children base their moral decisions. This study will be done through a sociocultural lens.

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development is viewed as a dynamic process-person-context-time (PPCT) experience where the individual is active within a complex, integrated changing ecology (Lerner, 2005). These four interrelated ecological levels can be visualized as one nested inside the other. Starting from the center and moving outward, the levels are described as

[the] microsystem…the setting within which the individual is behaving at a given moment in his or her life…the mesosystem is the set of Microsystems constituting the individual’s developmental niche within a given period of development…the
exosystem is composed of contexts that, while not directly involving the person, have an influence on the person’s behavior and development…[and the] macrosystem is the superordinate level of the ecology of human development; it is the level involving culture, macroinstitutions (such as the federal government), and public policy (Lerner, 2005, p xiii-xiv).

Bioecological theory was chosen as the theoretical framework for this study for the following reasons:

1. The studies of experiential education, specifically service-learning, provide an abundance of information about the value of the “reciprocal learning” between those that provide the service and those who receive the service (Furco, 1996). But the context in which this experience occurs is often overlooked.

2. Bioecological Theory allows for an the impact of the progressive philosophy of the school, the relationships with the adults at the school, and the teacher along with the learning environment which she creates, to provide a framework to understand these complex layers impacting the children’s social/emotional growth.

Research Design

Case Study Analysis

The literature on qualitative research designs revealed overlapping uses of terminology, in reference to a “case study.” Glesne (2006) explains that the “case study” has been used differently in a variety disciplines. On the other hand, Creswell (2006) stated that a case study is an appropriate research design gathering information from an
experience that is bounded by time and activity, employs multiple data collection tools, and results in a rich description of the case. Merriam (1998) describes a case study as one that allows her to see the case as something that she can “fence in” providing boundaries about the unit she is studying. Researchers who are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation often select case studies. Strauss and Corbin (2008) explain that the goal of a case study is not just to understand one case better but also to consider the case in light of the literature, and to consider what a case might teach us about other cases or implications for future studies.

Qualitative case studies can be further understood by describing the intent of the study. Merriam (1998) offers three categories: descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative. A “descriptive case study in education is one that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under study” (p. 38). Unlike the descriptive study which is not generally intended for hypothesizing or theory testing, interpretive case studies, which some researchers call analytical, are often used “to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to data gathering” (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). The last category that Merriam describes is the evaluative case method. Its intent is to provide “description, explanation, and judgment” (Merriam, 1998, p. 39). This study is both descriptive and interpretive. The phenomenon being studied is high quality service-learning while the hypothesis being tested is that young children can develop prosocial skills through participating in such initiatives.

A case study, like other research designs, also has its strengths and limitations. A significant strength of this methodology is the rich description it can provide when
focusing entirely on one case. Merriam (1998) says that because a case study is anchored in real-life situations it results in a rich and holistic account of the phenomenon being studied, providing insights that expands the reader’s experiences. Tentative hypotheses may develop from these insights that can impact futures research and better understanding of educational processes, problems, and programs.

As in many qualitative methodologies, one of the limitations is how the researchers’ perspective and biases impact their collection and analysis of the data. Because the researcher is the primary instrument, he/she needs to be well trained in observation and interviewing techniques. In addition, the integrity and sensitivity of the investigator needs to be credible. Some critics of case study analysis might say that the lack of generalizability is another potential limitation of this methodology. I would consider this an invalid criticism because researchers studying a single case do not do so with the intent of generalizing to other cases. I will discuss some suggestions for addressing these limitations later in this chapter.

Sampling Criteria

In this qualitative study, I will use a nonprobabilistic sampling strategy, most often referred to as purposive or purposeful. As Patton (2002, p. 46) describes “the logic and power of purposeful sampling…leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research…” For this reason, I have selected students, parents, and school personnel involved in The Pencil Project. This service-learning experience provided the participants with a high-quality experience that
utilized their academic and social/emotional skills and knowledge while providing a much-needed service to their school community.

In addition, I used convenience sampling, “a sample based on time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents” (Merriam, 1998, p. 63). Because of the nature of this study, this convenience sample provided me easy access to the participants. Because of my pre-existing relationship with the administrators who granted access, and the students, their parents/guardians, and school personnel, I was able to recruit many participants and collect rich data.

Data Collection

Schwandt (1997) describes a method as “…a procedure, tool, or technique used…to generate data, analyze data or both”. Because qualitative research is emergent and dynamic, I was flexible as I employed my methods of data collection once in the field. Moreover, I conducted focus groups and individual interviews along with collecting school documents and artifacts that emerged from The Pencil Project (i.e. pictures, storyboards). In addition, some of the students who were eager to participate had scheduling conflicts or were sick on the day of their focus group. Because they were so disappointed, I had an informal lunch with two boys and two girls so they could share their experiences in the Pencil Project. I did not record these sessions or use their stories as data. But as a researcher and school counselor, it was important to me that they could be included in a small way.

Focus groups are a commonly used method for collecting data for qualitative research studies. In this study, three groups of individuals participated in focus groups:
(a) the children who participated in The Pencil Project, (b) the parents of the participants, and (c) staff of the Burton School. The researchers facilitated the adult and children groups. In addition, a recent graduate of a counselor education doctoral program at a major university was a note-taker in the children’s groups and provided an opportunity to member-check by reviewing the themes she captured and clarification as needed. The protocols (see Appendix D, Appendix E, and Appendix F) were designed to include wording the questions in a general way, allowing for open-ended responses, and treating the focus group as a conversation. The questions were based on the researcher’s experiences and the literature review done prior to collecting the data.

Individual interviews are another method for collecting data by learning what is “in and on someone else’s mind” (Patton, 1990, p. 278). This research method can be viewed on a continuum ranging from highly structured/standardized to unstructured/informal (Merriam, 1998). I used a semi-structured interview with both the students and the adults. Providing open-ended questions allowed me to truly hear the “voices” of the participants. Creating some structure, particularly for the children, was important to help them “stay on topic.” Individual interviews were conducted for those participants unable to attend a scheduled focus group. I included open-ended questions asking for narratives and examples, and follow-up questions and probes that were related to the content of the interview to add depth and clarity (Legant, 2010). These individual interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim and supplemented with a log of informal conversations and meetings that I had with Mrs. Academy, the teacher who guided The Pencil Project.
Reviewing documents and artifacts provide yet a different kind of data for a qualitative study. Because of the site I selected, documentation is built into the daily practice of the school. The staff and students at BPS have been involved in a three year study with Harvard called *Making Learning Visible* (2011). In this project, the children, teachers, and parents documented their learning through multiple formats such as drawings, photographs, storyboards, and audio/visual recordings, all of which I accessed as data. In addition, because one of the critical components of high-quality service-learning is reflection, the children were engaged in this process during the planning, implementation, evaluation, and celebration stages of their project. These reflections will provide additional data.

*Data Analysis*

While the review of the literature reveals many studies on service-learning outcomes with older adolescents and college students, finding a qualitative investigation that includes the voices of children is scant. Additionally, learning how the environment impacts this experience needs to be explored.

I have used the case study analysis methodology for this research. According to Merriam (1998) a “descriptive case study in education is one that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under study” (p.38). In this investigation, I provide a rich description of how children describe their experience in the Pencil Project, a high-quality service-learning initiative, as it relates to their prosocial skills and the adults’ perceptions, as well. Although this phase of a qualitative study is often described as intuitive, referred
to by some as an art form or a craft, my approach to the analysis of the data was both rigorous and systematic.

Patton (2002) suggests that data can be analyzed by using the constant comparative method where interviews are transcribed verbatim and documents are also examined looking for patterns in the data to identify categories that were common across transcripts and documents. These patterns are then used to provide a detailed description or evaluation of the case being studied or to develop conceptual categories to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to gathering data.

It should be noted that I utilized grounded theory as an approach to analyze the data, rather than to build a theoretical framework. Adhering to the constant comparative method, my initial step was the transcription of my first adult focus group. The analysis of the data from this first group was compared to all the other data from subsequent groups and interviews with the intent of developing conceptual categories and identifying the relationship between the data. This raw data was indexed in a process called open coding (Strauss, 1987 & Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Broad categories began to emerge from this process helping me to identify my units of analysis. During open coding, I began to identify unanticipated themes regarding the children’s description of their experience in the service-learning project as well as their parents’ and other adults’ perceptions of the initiative. The next step of this iterative process is described as axial coding (Strauss, 1987). In this step, I revisited the data to continue to examine the relationship of the categories and clarify categories based on the data and my review of the literature.
I worked with two research team members (Appendix I) throughout this study to analyze, compare, and contrast data. Each team member individually coded the data. A meeting was held to discuss and compare patterns and codes that emerged. I then created a codebook (Appendix F and Appendix G) that my research team and I agreed upon. From these codes, the research team identified emergent themes.

*Researcher as Instrument*

The relationship between the personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity of the researcher and participants in the study is an interaction that shapes the research process (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). I am aware that who I am, with whom I interact during my study, and how I interact with the people I encounter influence the “story” I tell. Therefore, I have been intentional in the design of my study, providing a detailed explanation of the biases and assumptions that I bring to my work, so as to minimize any threats to validity. I understand that strategies to increase validity do not remove research bias, but are in place to reduce the effects.

I bring many experiences to this study as a teacher, coach, and counselor over the last 34 years. During this time I have gained valuable insights about the strengths of the progressive philosophy and the benefits for children engaging in experiential education, in particular high-quality service-learning.

These experiences, along with my thorough literature review, have shaped the following assumptions:
1. By definition, high-quality service-learning is designed to promote learning through the action of “service.” This service component provides authentic experiences for social/emotional development.

2. Children learn best by doing. Therefore, they need to be immersed in experiences that provide opportunities in which learning can occur.

3. Progressive education provides students with authentic opportunities, often emerging from student interests. With the necessary scaffolding from the adults (both teachers and parents) children can develop and grow from these opportunities beyond what they could accomplish independently.

It is my belief that the experiences I bring to this study provide a perspective that can be advantageous. But I also am aware that these very same experiences can lead to researcher biases. For this reason, I have put certain procedures in place to increase the trustworthiness of this investigation.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a concept that is often discussed in the context of qualitative research particularly in reference to analytic interpretation. Part of the trustworthiness of data is to realize and articulate the limitations of this study. Glesne (2006) makes several helpful suggestions about what to consider:

- discuss what documents, people, or places were unavailable to you; discuss what is peculiar about your site or respondent selection that could show the phenomena of interest in some lights but not others; approach the description of your study’s limitations as part of setting the context; recognize that limitations are consistent
with the always partial state of knowing in social research and elucidating your limitations helps readers know how they should read and interpret your work (p. 169).

I have incorporated these suggestions in my data analysis to increase levels of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Corbin and Strauss (2008) use the term credibility to indicate that “findings are trustworthy and believable in that they reflect participants’, researchers’, and readers’ experiences with a phenomenon [recognizing that] at the same time the explanation is only one of many possible ‘plausible’ interpretations possible from the data” (p. 302).

I used peer debriefing and member checks as two strategies to increase the credibility of my findings. In addition, Glesne (2006) describes the importance of spending sufficient time at your research site and focusing in detail on those elements that are most relevant to your study to increase credibility. I was intentional about attending to both of these elements.

In addition, to address the credibility of this research design, I used data, investigator, and methodological triangulation in the following ways:

1. Data Triangulation was provided by the following sources.
   a. Children who were identified as “gifted.”
   b. Children who were identified as “autistic.”
   c. Male and female students.
   d. Parents of both genders (mothers and fathers).
e. Parents who were also teachers in the school.

f. Other school employees (the classroom teacher, the building principal, and the 21st century coach).

2. **Investigator Triangulation** was provided by:

   a. Working with a colleague who was not directly involved in my study, but provided ongoing opportunities for me to process my thoughts, challenge my biases, and extend my thinking as I interpreted the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

   b. Employing the technique of member checking with the use of one of my research team members. She observed and recorded notes during all of the student focus groups, identifying the themes she was hearing. She then reviewed these with the children, seeking clarification when needed, to confirm that she was accurately representing their intended meaning.

3. **Theory triangulation** is the application of more than one theory to understanding and explaining the data.

   a. Lev Vygotsky’s social development theory

   b. Urie Bronfenbrenner’s bioecolgocial theory

   c. Sociocultural theory (SCT) of learning

4. The **methodological triangulation** techniques that were employed were:

   a. Adult focus groups

   b. Adult interviews

   c. Student focus groups
d. Adult demographic questionnaire

e. Document (The Foundational Principles of Progressive Education)

f. Artifacts (digital story, story board)

Transferability

Transferability as described by Marshall and Rossman (2006) states the “researcher should argue that his findings will be useful to others in similar situations, with similar research questions or questions of practice” (p. 201). To ensure this in my study, I maintained a reflexive journal to allow for critical self-reflection and increased self-awareness. Articulating and documenting my thoughts, feelings, and points of view strengthens the transferability. In addition, using rich, detailed data often referred to as “thick description” allows other investigators to utilize data from one study to inform others (Patton, 2002).

Dependability

Research is considered dependable if it provides the “capability of future researchers to be able to trace the logical methodology employed within the study and potentially recreate a similar study. [It] also allows the researcher to demonstrate the rigor of the field work conducted as well as providing an audit trail of the data collection procedures” (Gerhardt, 2010, p. 64). In addition, Marshall and Rossman (2006) define dependability as when the “researcher attempts to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study and changes in the design created by an increasingly
refined understanding of the setting” (p. 203). To address the issue of dependability in this study, I have established the following audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985):

1. Raw data which includes the transcriptions of my focus groups and interviews, demographic questionnaires, a link to the digital story, and photographs of the process board.
2. Data reduction and analysis that includes my working hypotheses and summaries.
3. Data reconstruction and synthesis that includes themes and their definitions, connections to the existing literature, and integration of the themes, their relationships, and my interpretations.
4. Process notes and reflections notes kept in a journal and provided by my research member who participated in my student focus groups.
5. The development of the participant protocol and adult questionnaire.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the last component of trustworthiness. Marshall and Rossman (2006) say that it “captures the traditional concept of objectivity” (p. 203). Can the study be confirmed by another? Do the “logical inferences and interpretations of the researcher make sense to someone else?” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 203). Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that by making qualitative research transparent, it increases the strength of the research’s assertions. In my study this will be accomplished through the aforementioned techniques of member checking, peer debriefing, triangulation, and journaling.
Avoiding Bias

The exploratory and open-ended nature of qualitative research necessitates strategies to avoid researcher bias that has the potential to result from “selective observations and selective recordings of information and also from allowing one’s personal views and perspectives to affect how data are interpreted and the how the research is conducted” (Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p.207).

Merriam (1998) suggests two strategies for reducing researcher bias. The first strategy includes using multiple sources of data, as was previously mentioned. In this study I obtained data from students, staff, parents, documents, and artifacts. Merriam (1998) also addresses the importance of using more than one method of data collection in order to increase the validity of a study. According to Merriam (1998) multiple sources of data should be complementary and carefully chosen based on the purpose of the study. For this reason I used interviews, focus groups, school documents, and artifacts that emerged from the service-learning experiences.

Other methods that enhance internal validity are peer debriefing, on-going member checking, triangulation of data and methods, keeping a researcher’s log and going back to the literature when necessary. Being aware of possible internal threats to validity and making a deliberate effort to address these is the ethical responsibility of the researcher. I have been purposeful and intentional about employing these strategies.
Reflexivity

Reflexivity is described by Johnson and Christensen (2000) as the “self-awareness and critical self-reflection by the researcher on his or her potential biases and predispositions as these may affect the research process and conclusions” (p. 208). From my perspective this is the most critical strategy to avoiding researcher bias. In this study I have addressed this in two distinct ways. First, I clearly articulated my assumptions as I begin my research. The second is my personal notes, kept in my researcher’s log as I reviewed my interviews and focus groups transcripts, documents, and artifacts to demonstrate accountability and ongoing awareness of how my predispositions may be affecting this study.

Triangulation

As I have previously explained, triangulation is another strategy used to promote qualitative research validity. According to Johnson and Christensen (2000) using multiple sources of data (data triangulation), employing more than one research method (method triangulation), having multiple investigators collecting and interpreting the data (investigator triangulation), and applying more than one theory to understanding and explaining the data (theory triangulation) are all ways to use triangulation. In this study, I have used all of the above strategies.

Member Checking

Research validity should not only be considered during the design of a study, but also in the midst of collecting the data (Glesne, 2006). One way to accomplish this is through the use of member checking, the process of “sharing interview transcripts,
analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with the research participants to make sure you are representing them and their ideas accurately” (Glesne, 2006, p. 38). In this study I conducted member checks with student participants through the use of a note taker in the focus groups as I previously mentioned. I engaged in member-checking by reviewing my data and themes with the teacher involved in the planning and implementation of the service-learning experiences, the parents who either volunteered their time in the classroom during The Pencil Project or whose children were engaged in the initiative, the building principal, and the 21st century coach.

*Peer Debriefing*

Peer debriefing has been previously mentioned, as well. It helps to increase the validity of a study through the use of external reflections and input on the research (Spall, 1998). For my study, I created a forum for two graduates of the doctoral program in Counselor Education at a large Midwestern university to review my transcripts and documents. My findings were strengthened through their feedback and the discussion that followed.

**Summary**

Chapter 3 has provided an overview of the methodology employed in this research study. After providing the context for this study, a description of the school in which the study was conducted, and the theoretical framework, the research questions were reiterated. The remainder of the chapter was devoted to all the components of the research design including the data collection and analysis processes and the factors that impacted the trustworthiness of this study.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the participants in this study and a synthesis of the findings. As previously stated the purpose of this study was to examine how a specific service-learning initiative (e.g., The Pencil Project) provided an authentic experience for the development of prosocial skills for the children who participated and an understanding of how they utilized these skills in the classroom and beyond. Prosocial skills are not only critical to the healthy development of each individual child, but to the collective peer culture and climate of every school.

My research questions focus on the following:

1. How do children and adults understand and describe the progressive school philosophy and approach to learning?

2. In what ways did the Pencil Project promote prosocial skills among children at a progressive school?

3. In what ways did the children demonstrate and utilize the learned prosocial skills in the classroom and beyond?

Demographics

The participants for this study were adults (e.g., parents and school staff) and children who attended The Burton School, a progressive elementary school in a Midwest
suburb. The students were all third graders at time of the Pencil Project but were in the fifth grade during the time of the study. Every child with the exception of three boys who no longer attended the Burton School participated in the study. More specifically, the students comprised 10 girls and 10 boys with diverse needs and abilities ranging from those who were identified for special education services to those who were identified for gifted education programming. The demographic diversity of the students comprised: one Asian student, one African-American student, and 18 Caucasian students. The socio-economic diversity comprised mostly children from middle-class family backgrounds.

Another characteristic about this group of students was that they “looped” with their teacher from third grade to fourth grade meaning that the same group of students and the same teacher remained together for a two-year period. Generally speaking at The Burton School, students were grouped in multi-age classrooms, which were very characteristic of the progressive education philosophy. But during the year of The Pencil Project there were a disproportionate number of third graders, so they were in a single-age classroom that looped the following year.

The adult participants included the building principal, the classroom teacher, the 21st century coach, and select parents (i.e., one father and nine mothers) of the children who participated in the project. Of those ten parents, two were teachers and one was a teaching assistant at The Burton School. The 21st century coach supported the mission of the school district by improving the quantity and quality of learning opportunities in all areas in which educational technology was appropriate. She provided leadership in the area of technology, as it related to the instructional program. She was also responsible for
modeling and coaching staff in ways to teach 21st century skills and integrating 21st century skills throughout the curriculum.

Theme Emergence

As previously mentioned, this research used both a descriptive and interpretive case study approach (Merriam, 1998). Throughout the data collection process, focus group and interview transcripts and notes, collected documents/artifacts (story/process board, digital story, school documents) were reviewed. During the analysis, I assigned codes to the raw data and systematically created a codebook (Appendix E and Appendix F) reflecting the literature.

I conducted the three student focus groups in the presence of one my research team members. Her role as a note-taker was to observe and dictate the patterns as she was listening to each student’s responses. Before the focus groups ended, she shared initial themes, clarified any responses that were unclear, and asked for confirmation from the student participants. Her follow-up discussion with the students was also recorded and transcribed. She also provided her written notes. The three adult focus groups and three individual interviews were facilitated by me, recorded, and transcribed. These transcripts, along with the ones from the student focus groups, the artifacts mentioned earlier, and the codebook were shared with the members of my research team (Appendix I). After we independently coded the individual interviews and focus groups transcripts, the three of us met to share the themes derived from the data. We concluded our discussion after reaching 100% agreement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) on the themes depicted in the data.
Presentation of Findings

This section of Chapter four illustrates the findings of the study through the voices of the children who participated in The Pencil Project, some of their parents, the classroom teacher, the building principal, and the 21st century coach. Throughout this chapter, all the participants are referred to by self-selected pseudonyms. Based on the data analysis, three major themes emerged: (a) the significance of the school’s philosophy of progressive education and learning environment; (b) the benefit of providing authentic processes in which to develop, understand, and utilize prosocial skills; and (c) the importance of sociocognitive constructs that predict prosocial development. Table 5 outlines the sub-themes that emerged from the aforementioned themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Significance of the Environment</td>
<td>(1) The Progressive Education Philosophy, (2) The Adults in the School, and (3) The Teacher and her Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Processes within the Pencil Project</td>
<td>(1) Problem-solving, (2) The Digital Story, and (3) Town Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding and Utilizing Prosocial Skills</td>
<td>(1) Caring, (2) Doing the Right Thing, and (3) Empathy and Perspective Taking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: The Emerging Themes and Sub-themes for the Study
In aligning with the intent of a descriptive and interpretive case study, these findings will provide rich, in-depth descriptions of the experiences of students and parents’ and the school’s staff perception of prosocial skills in the context of service-learning. The findings will also illustrate and support (Merriam, 1998) theoretical assumptions held prior to gathering the data.

The Significance of the Environment

The development and utilization of prosocial skills as it relates to the Pencil Project cannot be depicted without first describing the environment in which the Pencil Project occurred. Viewing it through a bioecological lens of human development, the ecological levels as described by Bronfenbrenner (Lerner, 2005) illustrate the interactional relationships that directly and indirectly shaped the prosocial development of the students. This phenomenon emerged as a significant theme throughout the data elements (e.g., individual interviews, focus group interviews, etc.).

“We learn as a community” The Progressive Philosophy

The Foundational Principles of Progressive Education (Staff Handbook, 2013) provide an overview of the guiding tenets of The Burton School. However, excerpts from the students, select parents, the classroom teacher, the building principal, and the 21st century coach provides a rich description of the studied phenomenon. More specifically the findings shed unexpected light on the importance of furniture, the use of space, the significance of relationships, the students’ understanding of how they learned and the way in which that manifested itself. The findings also echo the notion that learning is not a “one size fits all” experience.
When the students were asked to describe the progressive education philosophy to someone who was unfamiliar with their school, one hundred percent of them commented that they sat at tables and not desks. What was most remarkable about this observation was that the connection that they made on why this was significant to their learning and social development. Two students had the following to say:

Prof Clementine: I think a good part about [The Burton School] is that we don’t sit at desks, we have tables so we [students] can interact with people, like if they [students] need help, they [student peers] can explain the problem to us and get better help.

Child: I think it is better that you sit at tables….Like Professor Clementine said, you kind of interact with other people, and you can make friends by just working at the same time…

In addition to describing the actual furnishings, the students also commented on where their learning convened or took place. One child mentioned “sitting on the rug,” which was an area intentionally situated in a prominent place in all progressive classrooms for students to congregate as a community. In addition, student participants commented on the use of the “hallway” for group work, as well. Two students even remarked about the number of field trips that class had taken. Some Cool Guy explained, “Mrs. Academy always took us on field trips and kept us active. We didn’t go for like long periods in school.” Mr. K. echoed this sentiment when he said, “I agree with Some Cool Guy. Mrs. Academy would set up a lot of field trips, probably more than the average teacher would.”

A parent, who participated in a focus group interview and also was a teacher at the Burton School, noted that learning took place in each other’s classrooms, as well.
Regina was describing this in the context of delivering the new, improved pencils. An example of this point is highlighted with the following excerpts:

Regina:  Just going out into the classroom to deliver those [pencils]. At some schools maybe they would have just put them in the teachers’ mailboxes, or kept them for next year, or sold them at the next school store, or the teacher would have around to the classrooms, or they would have picked one person. I mean… just having that empowerment [and] flexible use of going in the hallways and you’re being welcome into other classrooms, and you’re invited into those spaces is a big part of all that.

Kassoy:  I think the use of time and the ability to go into other rooms and have everybody engaged-

Lola:  And when someone comes into those rooms, I think the teachers feel that that trumps what they’re doing. Even though it is not their project, it’s not their student. It’s like, “I’m going to stop what we’re doing to help whoever this person is that’s coming into our room” and that in itself, I think, is a culture of service-learning.

These thoughts are concrete examples that the children and parents understand the progressive education principle, using space and time in a flexible manner.

The children explained how working together in groups had both academic and social benefits. In their description of progressive education, the words “community” and “teamwork” were commonly used. As Dr. Superman exclaimed, “Well the word progressive, it kind of means like you work together, you’re like a community!” And Frizzy remarked, “We can learn from other people and teamwork…I think [that] helps.

There’s not only one brain. Her classmate, Christian, echoed that sentiment when she explained, “We don’t work by ourselves. We learn as a community.” These responses are a reflection of the progressive principle of [creating] a community for teaching and learning for all ages.
Another characteristic of how the progressive philosophy is lived by the children is indicated by their self-reflection, depicting an understanding of “how they learn.” Dr. Orange Banana Pepper explained, “I learn best-like in math, I learn best if I draw it out like a visual.” Another student who also saw himself as a visual learner stated in interview dialogue with me the following:

Dude: I learn better when I have something in front of me that can help me.

Kassoy: Okay, so you need to see a model of what you are doing or something visual.

Dude: Yeah!!

In another focus group, three boys had this to say about their understanding of themselves as learners:

Some Cool Guy: I don’t think I want to go at a really fast pace. I’m kind of a go with the flow guy.

Kassoy: Okay, so you need to take it slowly. Does that give you time to process it?

Some Cool Guy: Yeah!

Mr. K: Well, learning for me, I’m apparently more of visual learner. I kind of need to see it for me to really understand it more.

Kassoy: Okay, so seeing things visually help you in the learning process. Mr. Giggleman, did you want to add something?

Mr. Giggleman: Yes. Well, I need to feel welcome, a place where I feel safe.

The children were also aware that “one size does not fit all” when it came to learning at their school. As Cat in the Hat explained, “Here [at the Burton School]- they [the adults] see what you know and what you don’t know…they make sure it’s not too hard or
too easy. They make it so you’re not uncomfortable.” Another student, Frizzy, explained it this way:

Frizzy: Well, I feel like it [learning at a progressive education school] works better, because we each learn at the level that’s right for us, so we’re not all learning one thing, for some people it might be easy and some people it might be hard.

Kassoy: Okay, so you can learn at your own pace?

Frizzy: Yeah!

Authentic experiences that emerged in the classroom, from the children, continued to be one of the hallmark themes of the progressive education philosophy.

Aligned with this point, two adults commented:

Monica: Mrs. Academy didn’t just say, “Today we’re going to talk about what the creative process looks like.” We did the creative process! We’re not going to have a lesson today on how to make digital stories; we’re just going to do it. We’re not going to have a lesson today on what it means to have compassion and show empathy and, you know reach out beyond yourself. We’re just going to survey the kids-

Michelle: We’re going to jump right in and do it. We’re not going to just think about it, we’re going to actually do it and live it and learn it!

“What else about this school is inviting? The people.” The Adults in the School

From an ecological perspective, the adults in the school are the next “layer” which consists of connections and relationships with whom the child interacts that directly impacts their development. Based on the focus group interviews, both students and parents commented about this. Below is specific example of this point with Dr. Gerhardt:

Gerhardt: One of the things, when you talk about Mrs. Academy - you used the word “inviting” and you used it to talk about how you learned best and you also talked about your classroom. What else about this school is inviting?
Student 1: The people.

Student 2: Well, how when you walk in a lot of the people [adults] say good morning to [you] or Mr. Gonzalez sort of walks about the school and he tells you hello and he asks you how you’re doing and stuff.

This reminded Mr. Cool of a playful ongoing interaction that he and Mr. Gonzalez had that characterized his relationship with the principal. For example, he stated, “I’m kind of adding on when you walk in the door in the morning. I feel just kind of competition between me and [Mr. Gonzalez], like who can say ‘Hi’ first or ‘How are you?’ and he always wins!” On the surface, a simple “Hello” from one’s administrator might seem fairly insignificant, but from the eyes and through the voices of these eight year-olds, they feel welcomed and invited into their school each day.

Nene, one of the parents, shared her perspective of the adult relationships in the school. She explained how Mrs. Academy “connects” with her students. “She is very intentional and talks about her travels and talks about her kids.” Nene elaborated, “She not only tells stories about her son and her daughter and her travels to Vietnam. She shares he own life experiences with the kids, which I think makes her feel more personal and real to them.”

“She is so good at listening to them.” The Teacher and Her Classroom

The importance of relationships permeated the classroom with Mrs. Academy and the students as peers to one another. From an ecological perspective of child development, these are the primary relationships in the school day that impact the child (Rogoff, 2003; Lerner, 2005). For this study, each student was an active agent in creating and maintaining these important kinds of interactions. For example, Nene, whose
daughter participated in the Pencil Project, noted that Mrs. Academy was committed to getting to know each child. She stated, “I would say that she’s like a detective, at the same time, she is like a [school] counselor. I mean she really gets to know those kids individually and then provides what that child needs.” Through the words of a child, she attempted to get my attention so that she could share her thoughts:

Well, I have never forgotten about the Pencil Project until well-it kind of came on and off like when I saw things that reminded me of it I thought about it. So whenever I thought about it I thought about [Mrs. Academy], cause I usually think about it in 5th grade and I remember how [Mrs. Academy] was crying on the last day and about the last 5 minutes everyone was crying and I could never forget that because it didn’t make me feel bad like, oh, she’s crying. It kind of made me feel happy because she would miss everyone and I really wish that we had the same class and the same teacher- I mean I like my teacher a lot this year, but I think that the bond that we had [the last two years] was special.

Mr. Gonzalez, the parents, and her students, eloquently expressed Mrs. Academy’s underlying beliefs about children. The excerpt below captures this point.

She has such faith in their ability… she believes in them…she listens very well to her kids as she’s a master, I think, at hearing something she can build on…she takes them seriously. They know their voices are valued. You walk into [her] room and everyone is busy in an engaged way; again, self-sufficient. She is often with a small group on the carpet, so a lot of individualized instruction, a lot of kid voice and kids know in there that they’re valued and what they have to say is important and that they’re taken seriously.

A parent echoed the way in which Mrs. Academy expresses her belief and values the children in her class. The parent explained, “The free flow of the children driven curriculum is why we are here.”

The conversation with Dr. Gerhardt that follows not only reflected the students’ feelings about Mrs. Academy as a teacher, but also expressed their awareness of the child-driven curriculum that emerged and her ability to acknowledge this and then
subsequently guide them through the authentic learning experience (i.e., The Pencil Project).

Dr. Gerhardt: We all know that [Mrs. Academy] was the teacher who led this project. Could you have done something like this with a different teacher?

All: No, no way!

Dr. Gerhardt: So the teacher was important to this project?

All: Definitely! Definitely!

Frisbo: I think it was Mr. Cool that said earlier, or maybe Mr. K. Yeah, it was Mr. K. I also think it sort of eased its way in. [Mrs. Academy] gave us the idea but I don’t think that it was just right then. Then it all just happened. I think it just sort of started slowly easing its way until we had the idea of writing a business letter.

Another student wanted to reiterate that The Pencil Project was their idea, explaining that it was not a teacher-driven experience. The following excerpt captured this point:

I’d like to add on [to] what Frisbo said. [Mrs. Academy] didn’t plan for us to do this. It just came up. It’s not like one night, she [Mrs. Academy] was like, “Maybe we could write a letter and get new pencils or something.”

Frisbo provided a concrete example about how his peers were important when he joined his third grade class. He explained:

When I moved here, when I came on the first day, like maybe the first half up until lunch time, I was sort of confused, but then at lunch somebody [from my class] just came up to me and told me what to do and asked me to sit with him and told me that it was a lot different than my old school.

The adults and children alike articulated the importance of peer relationships, the teacher’s relationship with her students, her beliefs about her students, and the importance of emergent and authentic learning for the development of students.
The Processes within the Pencil Project

The Pencil Project was actually not a project when it began. It was merely a question. A group of children expressed frustration with the quality of their pencils. In fact, one child was astute enough to recognize that it was actually interfering with their learning. Frisbo explained:

It also is beside the fact it [the pencils constantly breaking] was annoying, it also slowed our learning down because part of the reason we started doing that [the Pencil Project] was because Mrs. Academy was getting annoyed because our transition time was getting slower because half of us were running around the room trying to find a good pencil. There were like three people at the sharpener and we needed to get going to the next thing, so then we’d have less time, I mean it’s only like a minute or two but, after a while, the gets really annoying.

Radioactive Cookie remarked, “I’d always be a little bit behind on my work because I’d always have to go sharpen my pencils!”

Consequently, Mrs. Academy wondered aloud with her class about the pencil problem, as she always did with her students and when they posed questions and share ideas. In doing so, she noticed two important teachable opportunities, when they had just finish reading the book, Ox-Cart Man, written by Donald Hall. Mrs. Academy used the book’s content to introduce the concepts of consumers and producers. In addition, but unrelated to their study of economics, she saw a “connection” between their pencil problem and the overarching theme for year, “What is the Common Good?”

With that, what eventually became known as the Pencil Project unfolded. Although there were many unanticipated “products” from this experience, such as 20+ business letters, 1,400 new pencils and markers, and a very creative digital story, the findings from this study supported the importance of the social and emotional learning
embedded in the process. If the boxes of pencils and the edited video were the only measures of the success of the project, the true measure of developing and utilizing prosocial skills would have been lost.

“They did so much around the process of what are we going to do next?” Problem Solving

As a group of third graders, the process of deciding what to do about the poor quality pencils they received in their Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) school supply packet was an opportunity to grow and learn. The parents and students alike were able to identify multiple outcomes from the process of solving this problem. Interestingly, one of the mothers noted that, when schools typically think about solving problems, the focus was on science and technology. She said, “Think of a problem and that’s the beginning of the invention-convention. Think of a problem. How can you solve it using a particular technology or just creating something new that wasn’t there before that somebody didn’t think of?” What set the process of the Pencil Project apart, she said, “Well, not all problems are thing oriented. Some of them are really social constructions and require social innovations.” This service-learning initiative provided exactly this kind of experience. Many of the outcomes were academic in nature. Designing a survey and administering it to the other third, fourth, and fifth graders to assess their level of satisfaction of the pencils and analyzing the “data” collected created hands-on experience to apply their current math skills and learn new ones. Composing, editing, and rewriting their correspondence with the manufacturer provided the occasion to use many language arts skills such as writing, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and understanding the parts of
a business letter. But rooted in each of these academic outcomes was what some educators refer to as the hidden curriculum, the social and emotional development of children. In a progressive school, however, with a strong CSCP, this part of the curriculum was not “hidden” at all. Instead it was visible, purposeful and intentional.

When asked about what they liked best or remembered about the Pencil Project, the children had a variety of responses. Frogtoad said that her favorite part was “Making the change. Making the change, like some people were fired, they made better pencils, and I just felt more mature.” When I posed a clarifying question, she confirmed that she felt important that, at the age of 8, “You could have a voice and let a big manufacturing company know that you were dissatisfied and change came from that and that felt good!” Another student, Ms. Unicorn, explained that she was “feeling kind of happy that they [the pencil company] didn’t just kind of be like, “They’re so dumb. We’re not going to make pencils just for an elementary school.” Dude exclaimed, “They actually listened to us!” And, Some Cool Guy also described his surprise at how the manufacturing company responded.

Well the thing that I thought was the best part was that in the call back from [name of company]...I just remember how exciting that was because they got our call and they didn’t just like, “Oh, some elementary school wants new pencils. So what?” They actually responded to us and they gave us new pencils and enough to give to the rest of the school!

This resonated with Mr. K, as well. He described what he remembered most as “probably like the best part for me... would sort of be what Radioactive Cookies said that giving it [the new pencils] to the people [the other students] was really the best part because you were helping out your school. And we changed like the new format.” Frisbo went on to
explain that he also “liked when [they] were giving the pencils out.” He then connected this action with the concept of the common good that he explained as, “just doing the right thing for everybody… it’s your choice, so you didn’t have to do it, but you thought it would be a good thing to do.”

Several of the children identified a moral dilemma that they experienced. They acknowledged that if someone was not doing their job well, that being fired was to be expected. At the same time, however, they were feeling empathy for the employees who lost their jobs in this process. When asked about their reactions to this dilemma Dude and Christian stated:

Dude: Well, I don’t know. I mean it made me feel kind of sad for them because they lost their job and they can’t get money for their family.

Christian: I had mixed emotions like him. I was happy and sad at the same time. Because the people that weren’t doing their jobs well, they got rid of them, but I feel bad for them because they got fired.

The children’s reflections expressed surprise at making a difference but ultimately feeling empowered to affect change. They also commented on helping others for the common good, but wrestling with the dilemma that standing up for themselves and others resulted in employees losing their jobs. It is worth noting that, from a developmental perspective, this level of awareness that the children expressed might seem to be a stretch for eight-year-olds. But, through the words of one of the adults, this was a concrete example of Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (John-Steiner & Souberman, 1978). The excerpt below captured this point.

… I think it’s the hallmark of this program, which she [Mrs. Academy] really exemplifies, which is that belief in kids to do things- that these kids can do that;
but not in a way that we push kids to do things that we know they are not developmentally ready for. So, I think we understand developmental stages of kids as a program, as a staff. And we understand there’s this piece over here and we can’t push them here. We know that would not be appropriate. Then there’s this piece here, well, of course they can do that. Then there is this gray, where I think a lot of people would not- a lot of staffs or a lot of programs wouldn’t push on that gray area as much in a real way like she [Mrs. Academy] did. But because we do believe in their capabilities, we do push kids that way and give them more credit than maybe other programs would. So it is an appropriate pushing of the developmental stage, not a hurrying of it. I just think that’s a part of the program [progressive philosophy] that really came through in that study [the Pencil Project] and in that service-learning project throughout the building. We’re really safely pushing kids.

When this problem solving process began, the students had no way of predicting how the manufacturer would respond to their letters and certainly did not anticipate acquiring 1,400 new pencils. So, when asked what motivated them to find a solution, Mr. K responded, “We all have our own little reasons, but I’d say most of it was really Mrs. Academy pushing us toward this goal and helping us getting through to figure out this problem.” This response illustrates scaffolding, a construct within Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, through the words of a ten year old. Scaffolding is described as a “process that enables a child or a novice to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts” (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976, p. 90). The process of solving this problem was made possible by the scaffold that Mrs. Academy provided for her class.

Although the children were quite capable of reflecting on their eight-year-old selves from their current perspective as 10-year-olds, the parents’, teachers’, and administrator’s responses provided an adult viewpoint that was also helpful. Three of the adults, two mothers and a father, had the following conversation that highlighted some of
the non-academic skills the students understood and utilized during the problem solving process.

Monica: So they had a good that had been purchased by the PTO and the school and they were dissatisfied with the quality, so what can we do about that? And they were concerned that other people had received defective products, not just kids here.

Kassoy: So you started touching on already the next question...I was wondering in what ways you do think that the kids benefited from participating or taking on – I shouldn’t say participating- taking on this whole pencil project?

Michelle: Because they realized it wasn’t just about them. Just like Monica said, it affected many more people than just their classroom. This was a school-wide effort and kind of a nationwide effort. These pencils are going out to the country, not just our school. So, I think kind of realizing that there’s a whole bigger picture here and how they can help everybody that purchases this product and not just their classroom. I think they realized how big it is.

Bubba: I think they realized their social responsibility and it helps develop their sense of responsibility for engaging in their environment. It’s not just something that happened to them. They can also influence the environment as well and I think they’re starting to realize that; and especially in combination with some other things going on in the school, the PTO fundraiser with the fair trade goods and so forth. I think all these things run together and they started thinking about their social responsibility.

This conversation revealed two perceptions held by the adults; how the students had an opportunity to utilize their perspective-taking skills, which was a concept presented through the school counselor’s classroom lessons; and their children’s awareness of social responsibility. The latter perception was reflected in the progressive education principle regarding raising social consciousness described as “encouraging the school community to examine and act upon complex issues within a democratic society” (Study
Site Handbook, 2013). Although poor performing pencils might not be viewed as a “complex” issue, The Pencil Project experience was a developmentally appropriate experience for eight-year-olds to begin to understand what being socially responsible means. To this end, the experience provided the foundation to start to understand the bigger concept of social justice. Mr. Gonzalez seemed to sum up the social and emotional outcomes found within the problem solving process, when he said:

So much of the work in the world probably that they’ll encounter is organizing people or projects, or trying to make an argument for this or for that, or helping to bring people together…they learned how to do that on a larger scale at age 8, third graders!

“We did the creative process. We are not going to have a lesson on how to make digital stories, we’re just going to do it.” The Digital Story

Making Learning Visible (MLV) is a research project through the Harvard Graduate School of Education at Harvard University. The Burton School was a participant in its study and it continues to integrate the findings of this study into their daily practice. These findings, the importance of the group as a learning environment and the application of observation and documentation as a way shape, extend, and make visible children's and adults' learning ("Making learning visible," 2006) were reflected in the process of creating the digital story, or what the children sometimes referred to as the video.

The 21st century coach, Monica, Mrs. Academy, and the children collaborated on the planning and creation of a documentary allowing students to learn and implement a wide array of technological skills. However, embedded in the process was the need to use many social skills. As Monica explained:
You can imagine we started producing a digital story about their journey through this process and we started with 23, I think, kids and this enormous experience. We spent literally hours. How do we do this with 23 children and make sure all their voices are heard?...they had to decide who got to speak, who got speaking parts, who wrote, who developed the slides we put in...then we would watch it. We’d have reviewing sessions and they’d all get to give feedback and we’d decide which things to change. So the behind the scenes efforts to produce 2-3 minute piece of digital work was, I feel, filled with social dilemmas. How do you treat each other and get this done with no hard feelings and make sure all the voices are heard?

Several parents reflected on what the process of creating the digital story meant to their children. Lola explained how this experience helped her daughter discover some of her gifts, fascinations, and passions.

My daughter likes the camera. She has tried to make movies. So just thinking about like building passion and opening new doors and windows, we’re thinking about what might you like to do? What are some new things? Unless you open a door, they’ll never see what’s on the other side. So, I think the whole experience opened the door and she kind of envisioned herself for a little while as like a director. She had her friends out back on the patio and they were making some movies. She really took that aspect, which was not what was intended [for the entire project], and enjoys camera work now.

In the context of a CSCP, the career education piece evolved, increasing the self-awareness of students’ strengths.

When asked what they liked or remembered most about The Pencil Project a common response I heard was, “the video!” Many students commented on being engaged in the creative process of writing the script, selecting the music, and portraying their characters. And although the end product was an impressive digital story, the children were able to articulate some of the social struggles they encountered. Frizzy, Christian, and I had the following conversation.

Kassoy: What about when you were making your video, your digital story? Did you have to use any of those [prosocial] skills?
Christian: I think so, maybe a couple of times.

Frizzy: Uh-huh.

Kassoy: Can you give me an example?

Christian: Picking parts. When we each had to pick a part in the digital reenactment thing.

Kassoy: What happened?

Frizzy: I’m not really sure. I don’t remember all of it.

Kassoy: Did everyone get the part they wanted?

Christian: No. We had to compromise.

Kassoy: Can you tell me a little bit more about that? What happened? Did you get the part you wanted, Christian?

Christian: No.

Kassoy: Did you get the part you wanted?

Frizzy: Yes.

Kassoy: Oh, okay. Well, that’s an interesting thing right here. Did you have empathy for how it must have felt for her not to get the she wanted.

Frizzy: Yeah.

Kassoy: Was it hard for you to see her get the part she wanted and didn’t get the part you wanted?

Christian: We both wanted the same part and she got it.

Kassoy: Okay, so tell me more about that. There was probably some perspective taking going on here. Tell me about that.

Christian: I mean I wanted the part, but I was glad for her because she got that part.
When the conversation began I had no idea that the girls wanted the same part. Thus, I observed an interesting parallel process unfold during this dialog. Frizzy’s initial inability to recollect the “audition” process was really her reluctance to retell the story of how she got the part that Christian wanted too. As Frizzy recalled feeling empathy for her friend’s disappointment there was noticeable discomfort as I was encouraging her to talk about the scenario. Once again, Frizzy was displaying empathy for how Christian was feeling having to revisit this letdown.

When the children saw their digital story for the first time, all the struggles faded into the background and the pride of what they collectively accomplished was there for them to enjoy. Monica described it for the other parents in the focus group.

You know, it was like a party. Just to say, “We’re ready to show you,” and just their rapt attention. They didn’t see one flaw. They saw all the good. They saw all that they had done and they complimented the little intro where the pencils pop in, you know, they come together. They’re broken, which is symbolic, and then they form letters and this little guy, from the very beginning, all he wanted to do was special effects. I just said, “Yes.” I had no idea how he was going to do it, but I said, “Sure! If that’s what you want to do we’ll figure it out.” But, he figured it out. He had been online and was looking for ideas and the symbolism of it’s broken and it came together. It was just amazing and they all said, “That was great!”

Documenting their journey through the process of solving the problem of substandard pencils provided the opportunity to reflect on that experience while encountering new successes and challenges that culminated in a video that the students decided to share at a Friday morning town meeting.
“A place to celebrate and share our learning.” Town Meeting

Town meetings were an integral part of The Burton School. The process of preparing for and executing the town meeting provided another rich opportunity for their social and emotional growth. The children were able to articulate how they navigated their way through this process and the importance of presenting their learning to the school community. Cat in the Hat explained why she thought the town meeting was important. “I think that town meetings are really important to the school because you sit with each other in the classroom and you talk to each other in class, but that’s only like 20-something kids…so you get to hear what other kids are learning and maybe your class will start reading this too.” The notion of learning, from others outside of your classmates and discovering new things, was the essence of town meetings for Cat in the Hat.

Another student saw the process of planning for and presenting at the town meeting as an opportunity to share their process of the Pencil Project with the rest of the school community. The following excerpt captured this point:

Well, I think part of the reason we did the town meeting was all that we- like some classes, they knew they got pencils, but they didn’t know about all the other stuff that was happening. So we informed them so that they would know what actually did happen, the story of what we did instead of just, “Oh, this class got some pencils and gave them to us.

In a later conversation with Dr. Graeter’s, Professor Clementine, and Cat in the Hat, they expressed these sentiments:

Professor Clementine: Well, it [the digital story] took videos of us reading the surveys, and it showed videos of how we cared and what part we did [the process]. It was just like if we didn’t share in town meeting, then they really wouldn’t have known how we helped them.
Cat in the Hat: I said earlier the town meeting teaches other people, so we kind of showed them what we learned and how we learned it, and what we did to get the information.

Dr. Graeter’s: If we would not have cared, we would have just kept it a secret, not shared the pencils. But for town meeting we wanted to share the pencils with anyone who wanted one.

The voices of these children described the experience of preparing for and presenting at a town meeting as an opportunity to show that you care about your school community by sharing the process of what and how you learned.

Understanding and Utilizing Prosocial Skills

Individual interviews and focus group interviews with the adults and children revealed the understanding of sociocognitive skills that were seen as predictors of prosocial skills (i.e., caring, moral reasoning, empathy, and perspective taking). In addition, the children, more so than the adults, cited concrete examples of how they utilized these skills. There were also additional areas of social and emotional development, such being a self-advocate and empowerment, which are not directly related to prosocial skills, but certainly worth noting.

“If we didn’t care about other classes we wouldn’t have shared our pencils.” Caring

The children were able to clearly articulate what caring meant to them and how they experienced caring for others through The Pencil Project. Both Dr. Superman and Cat in the Hat thought that surveying the other students and sharing the new, improved pencils demonstrated care for others. For example, they explained:

Dr. Superman: Like when we went to survey the people to see if they had problems with pencils, most of them did, so caring would be like when we got the new pencils, there were probably
groups of 2-3 people and we would go around the rooms and walk in the classroom with these boxes of pencils.

Cat in the Hat: I think worrying about other people and making sure that they—we just wanted them to have good pencils.

Dr. Superman went on to describe what caring would look like on the playground.

If you see someone on the playground and they’re just kind of lonely or if somebody’s on the ground and they’re hurt and nobody’s helping them, you can just help them walk and take them to the nurse’s office or something. Yeah, even if you don’t know them. It’s being helpful.

From an adult’s perspective, Mr. Gonzalez reflected on how caring for others not only benefitted the “other” people. It gave the children a feeling of satisfaction.

I think some of their reflections talked about how good it felt for them to make this difference [and] when they took the new pencils to the other classrooms, how those kids responded. So they’ve learned very early that doing things for others, service to others, not only helps others, but it makes them feel darn good.

In another conversation, the parents were talking about how the children demonstrated how they cared by sharing the new pencils with other students at the Burton School instead of keeping them for themselves.

Lola: For my child, that [the caring] didn’t come until the delivery day, when they had so many pencils that they were delivering 400 pencils to every teacher. I remember seeing my child and other children enter the rooms… just that act of giving, even though the only thing we may have done is given them a tally mark [while doing the surveys], they were giving back and they were really proud of that. You could see it in their demeanor. They were just so happy to be giving the pencils they had gotten based on all this work.

Kassoy: And you said it really came together for your daughter when the pencils arrived.

Stella: Oh, yes, that was the big day. She was so happy. And, I think she was happy to make the other people happy.
In my interview with Mrs. Academy, she talked about the children reflecting on their learning from this project and what it means to care for other people. She described to me the closing thought at the end of the digital story narrated by one of her third graders when he said,

“You know, it’s hard to believe that an international company could be affected by a bunch of nine-year-olds. That just felt good. We just felt good.” And now they get what is the common good. What is it? And this why. This is the payoff. This is why you have to think beyond yourself. It feels good. They got it!

“You have a choice to do it or not.” Doing the Right Thing

In the literature, doing the right thing was referred to most often as moral reasoning. Since it was an unfamiliar term for the students, the phrase “doing the right thing” was used in the focus groups. The children were able to explain what this meant and how their participation in the Pencil Project provided opportunities to demonstrate their understanding. In addition, many of the children gave concrete examples of what “doing the right thing” looked like at school. The following discussion highlighted this point.

Radioactive Cookies: Basically doing the right thing, it’s like anything if you find somebody’s stuff and doing the right thing is taking it back to them and saying, “Oh, here you go,” instead of taking it home and never giving it back.

Some Cool Guy: Doing the right thing can be a lot of things. It would be like what Radioactive Cookies said…doing a good deed like helping others. For instance the pencil project was doing kind of a good deed for the other classrooms and it was helping us.

Kassoy: So how did the Pencil Project give you an opportunity to practice doing the right thing?
Mr. K: Really the whole thing helped us learn how to help others. It’s like if you treat people with kindness; they treat you with kindness back.

Frisbo: I sort of have something to add on the other. Even just for a good deed, even at recess if you’re playing football or something. You know you’ve been quarterback a couple of time, but you really want to do it again; but somebody else who hasn’t done it, even just letting them be quarterback, that’s just a good deed.

Mr. K: I definitely agree with Frisbo. If you’re playing soccer and you just like to dribble the ball up and score a goal because you are really good and you haven’t passed it to anybody yet; then you start passing it to everybody, that’s doing something good.

In another focus group interview, the students expressed similar sentiments. The students discussed and recognized the element of choice when “doing the right thing.”

Cat in the Hat: I think it’s kind of like you have a choice to not having anything involved with it or actually be a part of something… like to help out. You have choice to do it or not, so to do the right thing is to choose to do the right thing.

Dr. Graeter’s: Yeah, I agree with the Cat in the Hat. It’s like having a choice of doing the right thing or not doing the right thing. Like someone is hurt, step up; or someone’s getting bullied, not just let it go, stand up for them!

Dr. Orange Banana: I think there’s a line, I guess. Like one part of it is being mean or your friend was saying you have to do this or something like that, you choose if it’s the right thing; or if it’s breaking their rules or something, then you say “no.”

Further, one child even viewed creating the video to teach the rest of the students about the process of finding a solution to their pencil problem as an example of “doing the right thing.”
I think some other reasons to do the right thing was to- making the video was kind of like that to show the kids- other kids what you did and to explain it for them instead of just saying, “Oh, we wrote to the company and got new pencils.” We actually explained the whole story and I think doing the Pencil Project was kind of- the whole thing was doing the right thing.

One student reflected on his perceptions of what Mrs. Academy anticipated they would learn from this project.

Dr. Graeter’s: Well, I feel like Mrs. Academy wasn’t just teaching us to write a letter. She was also teaching us to- I don’t know the right word.

Kassoy: Well, come up with it, because she’d be really proud of what you’re about to say.

Dr. Graeter’s: Citizenship- that’s the word I’m looking for!

And still other students thought that their teacher was trying to teach them to be self-advocates. In the words of Dr. I Love Ice Cream, “[Mrs. Academy] taught us to stand up for ourselves.” Professor Clementine seemed to agree with his classmate:

I think Mrs. Academy is a really fun teacher, because she doesn’t only teach us about how to do stuff we need to learn…so like we learn how to be nice to others and we learn how to stand up for others and yourselves, and we learn how to make our voices heard and not be afraid to say anything.

And Cat in the Hat shared similar thoughts with the following reflection.

This is sort of like caring and doing the right thing. Mrs. Academy could have just heard our complaints and e-mailed or called the company and told them and then just said [to us], “Okay, I called them.” Instead of doing that, she let us write what we thought about the pencils so we could actually have a chance to experience something like that.

In the words of this child, Mrs. Academy actually “did the right thing” by providing them with the opportunity to have this experience. Having solved the problem for them would have denied them the opportunity to learn from an authentic experience that emerged from wondering aloud with the children about their pencil problem.
“She got a different perspective...she was able to have her eyes opened a little bit”

*Empathy and Perspective Taking*

Unlike the concepts of “doing the right the thing” and caring, it was hard for the children to differentiate between empathy and perspective taking. It was evident that they had clearly made a distinction between “self-centered” and “other-centered” which was a developmental task from the preschool years. But, they had difficulty discriminating when they were using these sociocognitive skills. Mr. K.’s comment illustrates this confusion.

It’s pretty much like if you’re going to make fun of someone, but before you do it you put it- like you think of like, “Oh, yeah, it’s so funny,” and the other person, you put yourself in their perspective and the other person- or like you think it’s just joking, but the other person might think you’re serious and it might hurt their feelings.

Mr. Cool and Frisbo had an exchange that showed their understanding of these concepts.

**Mr. Cool:** We were all kind of frustrated because it took like six months for the pencil project to come to results, for them to respond to us. We kind had to go into their shoes, because I’m sure they have a little bit more important things to do than respond to an elementary school...just kind of putting ourselves into their shoes. I think that’s kind of hard for us because we’re only about 10 or 11. But if you think about it, probably being a businessman is kind of hard.

**Frisbo:** I was just going to add on to what Mr. Cool was saying. We probably weren’t the only people writing them. There were probably lots of other people having the same problems. So they were probably getting lots of letters for a while and then when we sent ours it just sort of topped it off and they had to make the decision to change them or else they’re going to run out of business because people weren’t going to but their pencils.

**Mr. Cool:** I kind of agree with Frisbo also, because I’m sure they had many different letters, not all exactly about their bad pencils, just all businesses get letters, so we have to think about that and it might make us feel less frustrated about how long the wait was.
These two boys demonstrated their ability to take the perspective of a businessman and utilize this view as a way they might have managed their frustration as third graders anxiously awaiting a response to the letters they sent.

In another focus group interview, I presented the children with a direct prompt to assess their understanding of the idea of empathy.

Kassoy: So from the time you were in first and second grade we’ve talked about empathy. Does anybody remember what empathy is?

Radioactive Cookies: It’s like putting yourself in someone else’s shoes, knowing how they feel basically.

Having heard Radioactive Cookie’s definition of empathy prompted this response from Frogtoad.

Frogtoad: I kind of felt bad for the people who got fired.

Kassoy: Oh, so you had empathy for the people who lost their jobs…

Frogtoad: Cause what if they didn’t find another job?

The parents had some interesting insights about how this experience provided them with opportunities to use empathy and perspective taking while engaging in the Pencil Project. Lola described her daughter’s social and emotional growth when she was paired with one of the boys on the autism spectrum.

Kassoy: Maybe you can give me an example, where it [the Pencil Project] allowed the children to understand another person’s situation or their perspective? Because typically younger kids are sort of self-centered and I don’t mean self-centered in a self-centered way, but do we see them becoming other-centered, being able to step outside themselves and take on another person’s perspective?

Lola: Something that occurred to me just as you said that, I think [name of daughter] was paired with another student in the survey and having to tally what all the other classes and there was some
component of that where she was paired with a student with disabilities. I think- I mean I remember her talking about that and just being who she is, she is not an outside her shell person. She’s rather inside her shell person, but she was able to kind of say something about that situation of, “You know, they did a really good job,” of just being able to recognize that they are learners and they can be part of things and you don’t have to maybe be afraid of some of the behavioral things that you can witness in the school building or even on the playground, but she got a different perspective and she was able to just have her eyes opened a little bit about how somebody else might work even if they have some issues.

In the context of the letter writing process, Mrs. Academy witnessed the students having to take another person’s (or group of people) perspective. It happened in an authentic way. She explained

> Writing is not linear. It’s a huge process. But because that had a real, specific audience and they really wanted to get their message across, and they knew- you know, I said, “We’ve looked at business letters and you just can’t go in with a complaint. You have to understand you have to give a suggestion.” And that’s part of the emotional piece, too, that you can’t fall on the floor and whine and cry. You have to think, “Okay, how am I going to convince someone else?” and you’re taking some else’s perspective, this company. The kids were eight at the time. I think that- because they had such a specific audience and they were very motivated, that it really pushed them through the process.

One of the parents, the father of a little girl who participated in this project shared with the others his nighttime routine with his daughter. As she is “getting ready for bed,” they converse about their respective days. Bubba, the dad, explained:

> That’s the time when we talk to each other and she opens up and tells me things about the day and so forth and you really see the development over time of her ability to say here’s what happened and then we’ll talk about why it happened or what she thought and then I’ll offer an interpretation… and you can see she’s really come a long way in terms of her ability to think about a situation and empathize and try to see the other side of it.
In addition to children and parents reflecting on how The Pencil Project provided authentic opportunities to demonstrate caring, “doing the right thing,” taking someone else’s perspective, and showing empathy, there are other social/emotional outcomes that were discussed.

“Just to see that they could have an effect on that corporation” Other Social/Emotional Outcomes

The most prominent other social and emotional outcomes that the adults and children spoke about included a sense of pride, feeling empowered, and recognizing a sense of social responsibility which encompasses social justice. Another interesting outcome, expressed by two adults, centered on the labels used to identify children with learning disabilities. Several parents commented on the pride their children felt and expressed. Michelle and Mary said:

Michelle: When it comes to the pencils, they were a little angry, you know…this isn’t okay.

Mary: They wanted answers.

Michelle: Yeah, there you go. They were enthusiastic about it though. They were very engaged in what the outcome would be and getting in touch with the company. They were proud of what they were doing.

Later on in the same focus group interview, Michelle and Mary revisited the idea of pride.

Michelle: I think they realize, even at their age, at their young age, that when they work together they can accomplish something like this. You know, their hard work, they really thought the whole process through, and I think they’re really just very proud of what they did.

Mary: I think they were really proud!
The idea of feeling empowered was eloquently expressed by Lola in following description:

For me I think it was the ideal project because it was- it went beyond just their community, but helped them as citizens of the world and knowing that if there’s something that you have actions that you can take for your rights to make a difference. It’s not like you have the right to a pencil that works well, but, you know, you can have a voice and you can share that voice with other people and not be afraid or intimidated, or feel like, well, I’m just a kid or I’m just a person, one person in this big world; but you can go out and let that be known.

Mr. Gonzalez reiterated this when he succinctly stated that these children likely thought that “my actions can influence something…they’re not going to be the kind of kids that say, ‘Well, I’m just one vote.’ They’ll see how they can make a difference.”

Jackie, whose son participated in this service-learning initiative, expressed the idea of social responsibility. She began by explaining her son’s dissatisfaction with the pencil even before this project emerged.

They all seemed to fall apart. So, yeah it was very interesting. I think that he felt like he was- it [the Pencil Project] was worthwhile doing. I mean clearly these were substandard and somebody needed to know…so it gave them a chance to, not only write things down, but to edit and to know that it’s going on. You know somebody is going to read this so they’ve got to take it seriously. I think I mean there was the idea that, all the way from the beginning to the end, that these really stink. Let’s do something about it. Spend time writing this letter, editing it, getting it just right, doing some of the research for who’s responsible for this, how do we contact them, what do we need to do, you know taking some ownership of it and then having that result at the end is really important. And I know from watching the kids it was not only that they got some pencils for themselves, but there were like thousands of new pencils for all the 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders.

Taking responsibility for this problem, from Jackie’s perspective was an opportunity for these third graders to be socially responsible within the context of their school community.
Another parent had a unique perspective based on a very personal experience that ironically coincided with this service-learning project. Her daughter had recently been diagnosed with a learning disability and was put on an individual education plan (IEP) which necessitated her being pulled out of class for some of her math and writing intervention. Nene tearfully shared her story.

It’s [the Pencil Project] beyond cool when you really think about it. This was a special time for us. Right when they had started that project, [my daughter] was diagnosed with a learning disability. So she was being pulled out of the classroom a lot…and this project was special for all of us because it engaged her back into the classroom. It was evident to her that there’s math that you sit and learn and there’s applicable math where adding pencils, you know, real stuff. It was just so cool because then with this pencil project she got reinvested like, “Oh, I don’t do math in here now. Oh, I don’t do reading in here now.” But [the Pencil Project] was a common thing that she totally identified with and loved. It was great!

In the end, the Pencil Project eliminated the disconnect that her daughter was feeling from being pulled out for academic intervention and provided her the opportunity to reengage in the classroom and utilize her academic skills in an authentic way that wasn’t clouded by her newly diagnosed learning disability.

In another interview, the principal talked about students with special needs since two children who were members of the classroom community were on the autism spectrum. He posited that in the context of experiential learning, labeling children could really be eliminated:

It is in school where kids pick up these labels and they are helpful to the school world because it helps us provide intervention and whatnot, but when- if we were always doing experiences, if we were able to have these kind of experiences all the time, we might come to see…these kids might not have labels. You might not even notice the way that we notice it now because of the narrow way that we have kids show us what they know. You might not even notice that this child has a learning disability.
Two participants summed up the Pencil Project in two very different ways. Professor Clementine said, “Well, the Pencil Project was like a roller coaster. There were ups and down parts, something that was so hard to do; and then there were ups where like, ‘Yes, we got it done!’ And then it came to an end and it was a downer.” And the parent captured the essence of the project from her perspective when she said, “So, I think that they really saw that a small thing like writing a letter to a company can make a huge change for your entire community!”

Summary

This chapter provided a thorough description of the three overarching themes: (a) the significance of the environment; (b) the importance of the processes within the Pencil Project; and (c) understanding and utilizing prosocial skills in the context of a service-learning initiative which emerged after rigorous data analysis by the researcher and team. In addition, each subtheme that developed was described. Chapter 5 will provide a more in-depth discussion of each of these.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of the Study

This qualitative case study explored how children and adults understood and described the progressive education philosophy and approached learning. In addition, it examined in what ways the Pencil Project, a specific service-learning initiative, promoted prosocial skills among a group of third graders at a progressive school and how the students understood these skills and utilized them in their classroom and beyond. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the following overarching themes emerged from the data: (a) the significance of the school’s philosophy of progressive education and learning environment; (b) the benefit of providing authentic processes in which to develop, understand, and utilize prosocial skills; and (c) the importance of the children’s reflections and the adults’ perceptions of the sociocognitive constructs that predict prosocial development. This chapter discusses how the aforementioned themes answered the research questions established at the beginning of the study.

The theories that provided the framework for this study were Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Theory of Development and the Sociocultural Theory (SCT) of Learning that grew out of the work of Lev Vygotsky. The bioecological theory describes children
as active within a complex, integrated changing ecology (Lerner, 2005). It is the reciprocal interaction of the ecological levels that influence the development of the child. In this study, ecological levels include the school’s progressive philosophy, the parents and staff as co-educators, and the classroom itself which includes the space and its furnishings, along with the relationships with peers and the teachers, and the teacher’s beliefs about children as learners and how the progressive philosophy unfolds under tutelage.

Sociocultural Theory examines children’s agency in the socialization process, the importance of social context, children’s experiences beyond their early years in the family and particularly their interactions and experiences with peers. In addition, Vygotsky’s theoretical perspective focuses on how the mind uses physical (technical) and psychological (language) “tools” to organize and understand experiences. In the context of moral development, problems or events “get talked about” and transformed into something that “matters” and ultimately becomes one’s innernarrative.

It was my premise that, within the processes of the Pencil Project, the students engaged in prosocial behaviors, but it is the language about these experiences that is internalized as a code of morality. The mechanism at work is the planning, implementation, reflection, and celebration of the service-learning, which is processed through the use of language, constructing meaning from the experience which becomes the narrative upon which children base their moral decisions.
Research Question 1: How do children and adults understand and describe the progressive philosophy and approach to learning?

Based on the findings from the individual interview and focus group data, the students and adults had similar descriptions of the progressive education philosophy and what manifested in the day-to-day school experience of the students. The sense of community and the benefits of group learning were expressed by all the participants. The physical learning environment was also described using multiple spaces, such as the classroom rug (where the students gathered as a community over the course of a day), the hallways (where the students could work in small groups), other classrooms (where the children went to survey their peers and deliver the new pencils), and off-site locations (when the children went on field trips). In addition, the students repeatedly commented on the use of tables to promote the sharing of ideas, problem solving, and developing healthy peer relationships. They contrasted their use of tables with a traditional school, where students typically learn at individual desks.

The authentic experiences that typically emerged from student interests and inquiries were another descriptor of the progressive education philosophy’s approach to learning. Embedded in the characteristic of a student-driven curriculum often was the role of adults who subscribed to Vygotsky’s idea of the zone of proximal development, which provided the scaffolding to assist students in learning beyond what they could accomplish independently. Further, both parents and students alike mentioned town meetings as one of the distinctive features of the progressive education philosophy. The students not only celebrated but also shared their learning and the processes behind this
learning at town meetings. The town meetings served as a vehicle for building community. In essence, the town meetings were a student-driven experience with teachers and parent volunteers frequently guiding the learning process. When all the components of the progressive education philosophy came together, the end result was a school learning environment that students and adults described as dynamic, interactive, inviting, and engaging.

Research Question 2: In what ways did the Pencil Project promote prosocial skills among children at a progressive school?

Prosocial skills are defined as positive behaviors that voluntarily benefit others (Corsaro & Fingerson, 2003; Eisenberg, 1982). The scientific literature identifies caring, empathy, perspective taking and moral reasoning as sociocognitive constructs that predict prosocial behavior (Corsaro & Fingerson, 2003; Eisenberg, 1982). Although there were numerous academic outcomes pointed out by the adults, and other inter- and intra-personal skills understood and practiced within this service-learning initiative, the aforementioned research question focused exclusively on prosocial skills.

Through the analysis of the data, three processes were found in relation to The Pencil Project: (a) the process of solving the problem of the substandard pencils, (b) the process of planning and creating the digital story, and (c) the process of planning and presenting the town meeting to share their learning with other students.

As I described in the data, the students were able to articulate what it meant to care for somebody and “do the right thing.” Further, the students demonstrated that they could make the cognitive shift from “self” to “other” centered. However, not all of the
students had a clear understanding about the social intricacies that distinguished empathy from perspective taking. Mr. K., one of the boys in the study, illuminates this confusion in the following excerpt.

It’s pretty much like if you’re going to make fun of someone, but before you do it- like you think of like, “Oh, yeah, it’s funny,” and the other person, you put yourself in their perspective and the other person- or like you think it’s just joking, but the other person might think you’re serious and it might hurt their feelings.

Throughout the interviewing process, students and parents were able to give concrete examples of how the Pencil Project provided the students opportunities to demonstrate understanding and utilize sociocognitive constructs. One adult participant responded:

I think they [the children] processed what they were going to do about it [the substandard pencils]. Were they going to write a nasty letter and demand money back or were they going to make them aware? I mean that’s a pretty huge life experience where—You can apply that in other things. You’re on the playground and you’re really mad, you have an option. You can cool off. You can hit him. You can go get an aide. You’ve got options. So I think the statement was very adamant. “We were not mean about it all.”

Several students articulated that writing and administering the survey to their peers and sharing the new pencils demonstrated caring. The students also viewed their town meetings as another way to demonstrate they cared. Taking the time to show their digital story that explained the problem solving process was an act of caring. The following dialogue illustrates the students’ understanding.

Student 1: If we didn’t care about the other classes, we wouldn’t have really shared the pencils with them.

Student 2: And we might not have done our surveys.

Student 1: Yeah, we might not have even told anybody if we didn’t [care].
Student 2: We wouldn’t have done the town meeting or anything.

At the point in the dialogue, I probed by asking the students to think about how doing the town meeting showed they cared.

Professor Clementine: Well, it [the digital story] took videos of us reading the surveys and it showed videos of how we cared and what parts [in the problem-solving process] we did. It just was like if we didn’t share in town meeting, then they really wouldn’t have known how we helped them.

Cat in the Hat: I said earlier the town meeting teaches other people, so we kind of showed them [the other students at BPS] what we learned and how we learned it and what we did to get the information.

Dr. Graeter’s: If we would have not cared, we would have just kept it [The Pencil Project] a secret, not shared the pencils. But for town meeting we wanted to share the pencils with anyone who wanted one.

Well, it [the digital story] took videos of us reading the surveys of how we cared and what parts we did. It just was like if we didn’t share in town meeting, then they really wouldn’t know how we helped them.” Dr. Graeter replied, “If we would have not cared, we would have just kept it [The Pencil Project] a secret.” He equated sharing what they learned as a way to show caring.

Both parents and children described situations where empathy was used. The most common time was when the students discovered that the letter they wrote created some significant changes in the manufacturing process, location, and with personnel. They were very concerned with the impact this had on the workers who were displaced or were “fired.” Additionally, this created a moral dilemma. The children felt empowered about making much needed changes and their rights as consumers to a quality product, but equally as concerned about the unemployed people.
Reflecting on the letter-writing component of this project, the participants provided some insights into their new ability to take the perspective of another person. As third graders, they experienced frustration with the length of time they waited for a response from the manufacturer. The following dialog illustrates their use of perspective taking.

Mr. Cool: We were all kind of frustrated because it took like six months for The Pencil Project to come to results, for them to respond to us. We kind of had to go into their shoes, because I am sure they have a little bit more important things to do than to respond to an elementary school. But just kind of putting ourselves into their shoes. I think that’s kind of hard for us because we’re only about ten or eleven. But, if you think about it, probably being a businessman is kind of hard.

Frisbo: I was just going to and to what Mr. Cool was saying. We probably weren’t the only people writing them. There were probably lots of other people that were having the same problems...

Mr. Cool: I kind of agree with Frisbo also, because I’m sure they had many different letters, so we just have to think about that and it might make us feel less frustrated about how long the wait was.

In closing, it appeared that this sociocognitive construct grew over time because as third graders they were quite impatient with the long wait and as fifth graders they had acquired the perspective of a “businessman.”

Research Question 3: In what ways did the children demonstrate and utilize the learned prosocial skills in the classroom and beyond?

The students provided many examples of ways in which they used their prosocial skills at school and home. Christian described how she showed that she cared for her younger twin brother and sister by letting them “go first.” Interestingly, Mr. Giggleman (who was
in a focus group) recalled a time in the bathroom at school. Apparently, a younger student entered at the same time. Mr. Giggleman explained that he let the younger student “go first” because he thought that was “the right thing to do.” Unicorn described a time that she and a friend showed that they cared and felt empathy for a first grader who was alone on the playground. They approached her and asked her to join them in their play. The last example was Mr. Cool’s experience trying to take the perspective of his teenage sister, which he admitted was rather difficult. The challenges she experienced navigating the social dynamics of middle school and the ensuing moods were unfamiliar to him as a fifth grade boy. Though he struggled to comprehend, he acknowledged that by trying to see things from her perspective, it made him a little more patient with her.

One of the parents recollected a recent experience with her daughter that she thought demonstrated the use of prosocial skills. Stella explained,

Now, it actually happened a couple of days ago when we [Stella and her daughter] waiting for [the] school bus. There’s a kid [who] couldn’t cross the street because there is no crossing [crosswalk], and then she [her daughter] went, “Maybe, I could write down there to the city to request to build the crosswalk.” I said, “Hey, that’s not bad.” Maybe that’s something she learned [that] from the project. If she- [shared her] voice and she writes something to the city, this [the lack of a crosswalk] might need to be changed a little bit, then she might get it [the crosswalk]- and she may not, but she might.

Jackie, the parent of a boy in Mrs. Academy’s class had this to say about shift that she noticed in her son’s thinking. She pondered how this might impact his future behavior with respect to others.

I wonder if this [The Pencil Project] was kind of the beginning of- it’s not a change of heart, but a change in his thinking about sort of the corporation versus the worker or versus the consumer. And I wonder if that has stuck with him…because he has brought up the ideas- just a few weeks ago he said something about- he asked me how much workers at Walmart get paid and this is
not a subject I brought up. We don’t shop there…and I also haven’t been on a
tirade about Walmart… he’s said other things, too, where he sort of made a
connection about the idea of the people who make things versus the people who
are in charge versus the people who buy things…it’s funny, because I do think
that this Pencil Project sort of helped him think about [other] people- and they are
trying to give us a substandard product here and who do they think we are? … I
mean these are things that he would come home and tell me. I don’t know- again,
it’s not like the service project was to help the homeless or something much more
obvious, but I do think that it had an effect on him. He’s going to be my little
labor organizer or something.

These excerpts illustrate some example of how students’ experienced and the parents’
perceived they used the learned prosocial skills beyond the classroom.

Conclusions

The following conclusions confirmed several of the assumptions that I held
regarding progressive education, service-learning, and qualitative research, particularly
with young children. However by contrast, the accounts given by both the students and
the adults revealed two findings that I did not expect. The significance of the teacher and
principal, both from the perception of the adults and the experiences of the students, was
far greater than I anticipated. And likewise the influence of the progressive education
philosophy was more important to the success of The Pencil Project, as well.

The assumptions that I held about the Dewey influenced progressive education
philosophy was confirmed by this study. The opportunity to “learn by doing” and the
value of emergent curriculum for student engagement was confirmed by the students’
experiences with the Pencil Project. As previously mentioned, the children recognized
that Mrs. Academy gave them an opportunity to “learn by doing.” Their study of
economics (e.g., consumers and producers) through an authentic problem for which there
was no predetermined solution or guaranteed outcome became an experiential one. The academic outcomes and engaged learning have been described. However, with respect to prosocial development, it was critical that this experience was embedded in a service-learning project. It was the “service” component of the experience that provided the opportunities for the students to demonstrate understanding and utilize the prosocial skills of caring, empathy, perspective-taking and wrestling with moral dilemmas of “doing the right thing.”

This qualitative study was designed to examine how service-learning provided authentic experiences to support the development of prosocial skills in elementary-aged school children. The findings of this research were both expanded and enriched by the student participants. Focusing solely on the perceptions of the adults would have limited these findings. It is true that including young children in a qualitative study can be time consuming and requires the researcher to have the ability to build rapport with the students and possess interviewing skills that are appropriate for children. To this end, including student participation in this study proved to be invaluable.

One finding that was more significant than I anticipated was the ecological influence on the students’ social and emotional experiences. It was the assets, skills, and attributes that Mrs. Academy brought to this project, along with the strong presence of the progressive philosophy that from the perspective of the adults and the experiences described by the students, were essential to the Pencil Project emerging as an authentic experience. I anticipated that these would be contributing factors, but could not have predicted how critical they were in the eyes of the research participants. Another
unexpected outcome was the significance of the disposition of the principal. His intentional actions to make students feel welcomed and valued was important. In addition, his leadership to support and promote the progressive philosophy was essential. Furthermore, his awareness of the strengths of Mrs. Academy and the Pencil Project itself reflects his the importance of the leadership he provided through his active participation in the school community.

Discussion and Implications

Research supported the claim that there are numerous positive outcomes for students who engage in high-quality service-learning (Billig, 2009; Bradley, 2006; Freeman & King, 2001; Furco, 2002; Legant, 2010; Wade, 2009). There are also many studies that support the idea of using these experiences to build and/or enhance the developmental assets of the participants (Catalano et al., 2004; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Benson et al., 2006; Berkowitz et al., 2006). However, all service-learning opportunities are not necessarily of the same quality. A major factor that influences service-learning outcomes is the attributes and skills of the adults facilitating the experience. Therefore, educators have the professional and ethical responsibility to be properly trained in the pedagogy of service-learning to ensure a high quality experience for their students that maximizes the potential positive outcomes for the participants.

Both collaboration and advocacy are important roles of the school counselor (ASCA, 2012). Therefore, another implication for school counselors is to work side-by-side with teachers who are engaging their students in service-learning experiences, particularly when the curriculum connection is in the social and emotional domains
and/or career development. Although this is a more subtle implication, school counselors can also advocate for their profession and their students by partnering with businesses, community members, and organizations through successful service-learning initiatives.

Another implication is the importance of providing service-learning opportunities when children are in the early stages of their social and emotional development. Participating in activities that benefit others not only has the potential to create a school community of caring citizens, but also has the potential to build positive community relationships, and strengthen the asset development in children.

Limitations

Although all research methodology has its limitations, qualitative research is often criticized the most. Concerns about subjectivity and the integrity of the researcher are often at the forefront (Schwandt, 1994; Patton, 2002). I acknowledge that my findings cannot be generalized to other populations. This research is designed to examine how children and adults understand and describe the progressive school philosophy and approach to learning. It also describes the ways the Pencil Project promoted prosocial skills among children through their voices and depicts how the children demonstrate their understanding and utilize the learned prosocial skills in the classroom and beyond.

It is my intent that this study will inform other research on service-learning outcomes for young children. In addition, it can provide school counselors and counselor educators another lens through which to study the development of prosocial skills in primary age students. I recognize my responsibility to take precautions to be objective in what data I collect and how I interpret it. My history and personal experiences will be
critically examined and reflected upon in the context of the data I chose to collect and interpret.

In addition to limitations characteristic of qualitative research, there were those that were specific to this study. This study was done retrospectively, therefore it must be noted that there was a 2-year time lapse between the service-learning initiative and the interviews. Additionally, the study occurred in a progressive school whose principles reflect the value of “learning by doing”. There is also the possibility of bias inherent in the sample of participants.

Another potential limitation of my study is with regard to the professional training and motivation of the teacher using service-learning with their class. Krebs (2011) of the University of New Mexico recently completed a “survey research study conducted over a three-year period with both teacher candidates and their inservice cooperating teachers who participated in a series of three professional development workshops on planning and implementing high-quality service-learning” (p. 2). She posits that “in order for teachers to implement high-quality service-learning projects, they must first be motivated to do so, and second, be professionally trained in this process” (p. 19). Therefore teachers and counselors who utilize service-learning have the professional and ethical responsibility to seek out the proper training to ensure that they provide a quality experience which will maximize the positive outcomes for the participants. The teacher who facilitated this project was trained as a progressive educator, but did not have professional development in service-learning per se.
Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several recommendations can be made for school counselors, teachers, policy makers, and researchers.

Recommendations for School Counselors and Teachers

1. When developing a comprehensive school counseling program (CSPC), school counselors can incorporate the use of service-learning as an authentic experience to understand and utilize prosocial skills.

2. School counselors and teachers can collaborate on the planning and implementation of high-quality service-learning, meeting their curricular objectives and maximizing the benefits of experiential learning.

3. Using high-quality service-learning initiatives, school counselors can cast a positive light on their students as assets to their community and provide visibility to the school counseling profession.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

1. Politicians and stakeholders in the position of establishing policies that impact students and educators cannot overlook the influence that the learning environment has on the development of our youth.

2. Policy makers have the responsibility to understand how school choice and non-traditional programs are impacted by a “one-size-fits-all” approach to educational reform. The current emphasis on high-stakes tests minimizes teachers’ opportunities to provide authentic experiences through emergent curriculum and overlooks and
undervalues the importance of the social and emotional development of children and adolescents.

Recommendations for Researchers

1. Consideration should be given to incorporating children in qualitative studies where the data they can provide enriches the findings from the research and provides valuable information for future studies.

Future Directions

This study provides a comprehensive look at one service-learning project in the context of a progressive school that is committed to its philosophy. Because the learning environment and the adult participants were such a significant influence on the outcomes of this experience further studies should be undertaken in a different educational settings. In addition, future research can examine the outcomes for children both older and younger than the participants in this study.

In light of the media attention given to face-to-face and cyber-bullying, school climate is currently being scrutinized. Further research on how service-learning promotes a culture of helping others may provide additional insights into decreasing bullying and improving the school climate.

Because this study was done retrospectively, the findings may have been influenced by other mediating variables and the natural course of the children’s development. Reproducing this study in “real time” would provide additional data that might be helpful to understanding more about the development of prosocial skills.
Final Thoughts

Prosocial behaviors, actions intended to benefit others, have far-reaching implications for understanding morality, aggression, interpersonal relationships, mental health, and well-being (Carlo, 2006). Providing opportunities for children to understand and utilize these prosocial skills benefit the individual child, the collective peer culture, and the climate of every school. Research indicates that a positive school climate increases attendance and academic engagement. Although this is not a guarantee to the success of all students, it certainly is a good place to start.

It is my hope that this study will inform future research to enhance our knowledge of prosocial behaviors and increase our understanding of this small, but critical aspect of human behavior.
Appendix A: K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice
The K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice were developed by the National Youth Leadership Council with funding from the State Farm Companies Foundation. Working from a base of 20 years of professional wisdom and practice, NYLC worked with other leaders in service-learning and engaged RAND Research Corporation to ensure that the Standards included the strongest evidence-based elements of effective practice. Today young people, teachers, school and district administrators, community members, and others interested in service-learning participated in panels across the United States to strengthen the language of the standards and their indicators. For more information, visit www.nylc.org/standards.

K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice

Meaningful Service

Service-learning activity engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.

Indicators:
1. Service-learning experiences are appropriate to participant ages and developmental abilities.
2. Service-learning addresses issues that are personally relevant to the participants.
3. Service-learning provides participants with learning and engaging service activities.
4. Service-learning encourages participants to understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues being addressed.
5. Service-learning leads to attainable and visible outcomes that are valued by those being served.

Link to Curriculum

Service-learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.

Indicators:
1. Service-learning has clearly articulated learning goals.
2. Service-learning is aligned with the academic and/or programmatic curricula.
3. Service-learning helps participants learn how to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another.
4. Service-learning that takes place in schools is formally recognized in school board policies and student records.

Service-learning is a philosophy, pedagogy, and model for community development that is used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.
Reflection
Service-learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.
Indicators:
1. Service-learning reflection includes a variety of verbal, written, artistic, and nonverbal activities to demonstrate understanding and changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes.
2. Service-learning reflection occurs before, during, and after the service experience.
3. Service-learning reflection prompts participants to think deeply about complex community problems and alternative solutions.
4. Service-learning reflection encourages participants to examine their preconceptions and assumptions in order to explore and understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens.
5. Service-learning reflection encourages participants to examine a variety of social and civic issues related to their service-learning experience so that participants understand connections to public policy and civic life.

Diversity
Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.
Indicators:
1. Service-learning helps participants identify and analyze different points of view to gain understanding of multiple perspectives.
2. Service-learning helps participants develop interpersonal skills in conflict resolution and group decision-making.
3. Service-learning helps participants actively seek to understand and value the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of those offering and receiving service.
4. Service-learning encourages participants to recognize and overcome stereotypes.
Youth Voice

Service-learning provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults.

Indicators:

1. Service-learning engages youth in generating ideas during the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.
2. Service-learning involves youth in the decision-making process throughout the service-learning experiences.
3. Service-learning involves youth and adults in creating an environment that supports trust and open expression of ideas.
4. Service-learning promotes acquisition of knowledge and skills that enhance youth leadership and decision-making.
5. Service-learning involves youth in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the service-learning experience.

Partnerships

Service-learning partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs.

Indicators:

1. Service-learning involves a variety of partners, including youth, educators, families, community members, community-based organizations, and/or businesses.
2. Service-learning partnerships are characterized by frequent and regular communication to keep all partners well-informed about activities and progress.
3. Service-learning partners collaboratively establish a shared vision and set common goals to address community needs.
4. Service-learning partners collaboratively develop and implement action plans to meet specified goals.
5. Service-learning partners share knowledge and understanding of school and community assets and needs, and view each other as valued resources.
Progress Monitoring

Service-learning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals and uses results for improvement and sustainability.

Indicators:

1. Service-learning participants collect evidence of progress toward meeting specific service goals and learning outcomes from multiple sources throughout the service-learning experience.
2. Service-learning participants collect evidence of the quality of service-learning implementation from multiple sources throughout the service-learning experience.
3. Service-learning participants use evidence to improve service-learning experiences.
4. Service-learning participants communicate evidence of progress toward goals and outcomes with the broader community, including policy-makers and education leaders, to deepen service-learning understanding and ensure that high quality practices are sustained.

Duration and Intensity

Service-learning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.

Indicators:

1. Service-learning experiences include the processes of investigating community needs, preparing for service, action, reflection, demonstration of learning and impacts, and celebration.
2. Service-learning is conducted during concentrated blocks of time across a period of several weeks or months.
3. Service-learning experiences provide enough time to address identified community needs and achieve learning outcomes.
Appendix B: 40 Developmental Assets
## 40 Developmental Assets® for Children Grades K–3 (ages 5-9)

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as Developmental Assets®—that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

### Support
1. **Family Support**—Family continues to be a consistent provider of love and support for the child’s unique physical and emotional needs.
2. **Positive Family Communication**—Parent(s) and child communicate openly, respectfully, and frequently, with child receiving praise for her or his efforts and accomplishments.
3. **Other Adult Relationships**—Child receives support from adults other than her or his parent(s), with the child sometimes experiencing relationships with a nonparent adult.
4. **Caring Neighborhood**—Parent(s) and child experience friendly neighbors who affirm and support the child’s growth and sense of belonging.
5. **Caring School Climate**—Child experiences warm, welcoming relationships with teachers, caregivers, and peers at school.
6. **Parent Involvement in Schooling**—Parent(s) talk about the importance of education and are actively involved in the child’s school success.

### Empowerment
7. **Community Values Children**—Children are welcomed and included throughout community life.
8. **Children as Resources**—Child contributes to family decisions and has opportunities to participate in positive community events.
9. **Service to Others**—Child has opportunities to serve in the community with adult support and approval.
10. **Safety**—Parent(s) and community adults ensure the child’s safety while keeping in mind her or his increasing independence.

### Boundaries & Expectations
11. **Family Boundaries**—Family maintains supervision of the child, has reasonable guidelines for behavior, and always knows where the child is.
12. **School Boundaries**—Schools have clear, consistent rules and consequences and use a positive approach to discipline.
13. **Neighborhood Boundaries**—Neighbors and friends’ parents help monitor the child’s behavior and provide feedback to the parent(s).
14. **Adult Role Models**—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior and encourage the child to follow these examples.
15. **Positive Peer Influence**—Parent(s) monitor the child’s friends and encourage spending time with those who set good examples.
16. **High Expectations**—Parent(s), teachers, and other influential adults encourage the child to do her or his best in all tasks and celebrate her or his successes.

### Constructive Use of Time
17. **Creative Activities**—Child participates weekly in music, dance, or other form of artistic expression outside of school.
18. **Child Programs**—Child participates weekly in at least one sport, club, or organization within the school or community.
19. **Religious Community**—Child participates in age-appropriate religious activities and caring relationships that nurture her or his spiritual development.
20. **Time at Home**—Child spends time at home playing and doing positive activities with the family.

### Commitment to Learning
21. **Achievement Motivation**—Child is encouraged to remain curious and demonstrates an interest in doing well at school.
22. **Learning Engagement**—Child is enthusiastic about learning and enjoys going to school.
23. **Homework**—Child completes assigned homework.
24. **Bunding to School**—Child is encouraged to have a sense of belonging at school.
25. **Reading for Pleasure**—Child reads books outside of school daily.

### Positive Values
26. **Caring**—Parent(s) help child grow in empathy, understanding, and helping others.
27. **Equality and Social Justice**—Parent(s) encourage and promote the child’s development in recognizing and seeking the truth.
28. **Integrity**—Parent(s) help child develop her or his own sense of right and wrong behavior.
29. **Honesty**—Parent(s) encourage child’s development in recognizing and telling the truth.
30. **Responsibility**—Parent(s) encourage the child and take responsibility for her or his actions at school and at home.
31. **Self Regulation**—Parent(s) encourage child’s growth in regulating her or his own emotions and behaviors and in understanding the importance of healthy habits and choices.

### Social Competencies
32. **Planning and Decision Making**—Parent(s) help child think through and plan school and play activities.
33. **Interpersonal Competence**—Child seeks to build friendships and is learning about self-control.
34. **Cultural Competence**—Child is learning about her or his own cultural identity and is encouraged to interact positively with children of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.
35. **Resistance Skills**—Child is learning to recognize risky or dangerous situations and is able to seek help from trusted adults.
36. **Peaceful Conflict Resolution**—Child continues learning to resolve conflicts without hitting, throwing a tantrum, or using harsh language.

### Positive Identity
37. **Peronal Power**—Child has a growing sense of having influence over some of the things that happen in her or his life.
38. **Self-esteem**—Child likes herself or himself and feels valued by others.
39. **Sense of Purpose**—Child welcomes new experiences and imagines what he or she might do or be in the future.
40. **Positive View of Personal Future**—Child has a growing curiosity about the world, her or his place in it.

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## 40 Developmental Assets® for Middle Childhood (ages 8-12)

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as Developmental Assets®—that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Assets</th>
<th>Commitment to Learning</th>
<th>Positive Values</th>
<th>Internal Assets</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
<td>1. Family support—Family life provides high levels of love and support.</td>
<td>21. Achievement Motivation—Child is motivated and strives to do well in school.</td>
<td>2. Planning and decision making—Child thinks about decisions and is usually happy with results of her or his decisions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Positive family communication—Parent(s) and child communicate positively. Child feels comfortable seeking advice and counsel from parent(s).</td>
<td>22. Learning Engagement—Child is responsive, attentive, and actively engaged in learning at school and enjoys participating in learning activities outside of school.</td>
<td>3. Interpersonal Competence—Child cares about and is affected by other people’s feelings, enjoys making friends, and, when frustrated or angry, tries to calm her- or himself.</td>
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<td>3. Other adult relationships—Child receives support from adults other than her or his parent(s).</td>
<td>23. Caring—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to help other people.</td>
<td>32. Cultural Competence—Child knows and is comfortable with people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds with her or his own cultural identity.</td>
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<td>4. Caring neighborhood—Child experiences caring neighbors.</td>
<td>24. Equality and social justice—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to speak up for equal rights for all people.</td>
<td>33. Resistance skills—Child can stay away from people who are likely to get her or him in trouble and is able to say no to doing wrong or dangerous things.</td>
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<td>5. Caring school climate—Relationships with teachers and peers provide a caring, encouraging environment.</td>
<td>25. Integrity—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to stand up for one’s beliefs.</td>
<td>34. Peaceful conflict resolution—Child seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.</td>
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<td>6. Parent involvement in schooling—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the child succeed in school.</td>
<td>26. Responsibility—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to accept personal responsibility for behavior.</td>
<td>35. Personal power—Child feels he or she has some influence over things that happen in her or his life.</td>
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<td>7. Community values youth—Child feels valued and appreciated by adults in the community.</td>
<td>27. Healthy Lifestyle—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to have good health habits and an understanding of healthy sexuality.</td>
<td>36. Self-esteem—Child likes and is proud to be the person that he or she is.</td>
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<td>8. Children as resources—Child is included in decisions at home and in the community.</td>
<td>28. Sense of purpose—Child sometimes thinks about what life means and whether there is a purpose for her or his life.</td>
<td>37. Sense of purpose—Child is optimistic about her or his personal future.</td>
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<td>9. Service to others—Child has opportunities to help others in the community.</td>
<td>29. Positive identity—Child sometimes thinks about what life means and whether there is a purpose for her or his life.</td>
<td>38. Positive view of personal future—Child is optimistic about her or his personal future.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Safety—Child feels safe at home, at school, and in his or her neighborhood.</td>
<td>31. Achievement Motivation—Child is motivated and strives to do well in school.</td>
<td>39. Positive identity—Child sometimes thinks about what life means and whether there is a purpose for her or his life.</td>
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<td>11. Family boundaries—Family has clear and consistent rules and consequences and monitors the child’s whereabouts.</td>
<td>32. Planning and decision making—Child thinks about decisions and is usually happy with results of her or his decisions.</td>
<td>40. Personal power—Child feels he or she has some influence over things that happen in her or his life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boundaries &amp; Expectations</strong></td>
<td>12. School Boundaries—School provides clear rules and consequences.</td>
<td>33. Interpersonal Competence—Child cares about and is affected by other people’s feelings, enjoys making friends, and, when frustrated or angry, tries to calm her- or himself.</td>
<td>41. Self-esteem—Child likes and is proud to be the person that he or she is.</td>
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<td>13. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighborhood takes responsibility for monitoring the child’s behavior.</td>
<td>34. Cultural Competence—Child knows and is comfortable with people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds with her or his own cultural identity.</td>
<td>42. Sense of purpose—Child sometimes thinks about what life means and whether there is a purpose for her or his life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constructive Use of Time</strong></td>
<td>14. Adult role models—Parent(s) and other adults in the child’s family, as well as nonfamily adults, model positive, responsible behavior.</td>
<td>35. Resistance skills—Child can stay away from people who are likely to get her or him in trouble and is able to say no to doing wrong or dangerous things.</td>
<td>43. Positive view of personal future—Child is optimistic about her or his personal future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. How would you characterize your child, specifically, or the children at The Burton School, in general?

2. How would you describe the learning environment at The Burton School, in general? In Mrs. Academy’s class, specifically?

3. In what ways do you think the children benefited from participating in The Pencil Project last year? Please share some concrete examples.

4. I would like to focus on the social/emotional aspects that you have identified. Can you describe specific examples in which this project allowed children to understand another person’s situation?

5. Can you give concrete examples in which The Pencil Project allowed children to shift from being “self-concerned” to “other-concerned?”

6. Can you describe ways that this project necessitated the children to think about dilemma situations where issues of justice, fairness, or caring are prevalent?

7. Mr. Collaros describes the progressive philosophy as “authentic learning opportunities arising from the learner’s interest with an emphasis on interdisciplinary experiences that consider the child holistically and as fully capable of acquiring deep understanding with equal attention paid both to the products and processes of learning.” In what ways do you see The Pencil Project reflect the progressive philosophy?

8. Please describe concrete examples that demonstrate the ways the children have used what they have learned from this project in their classroom. In the school community? At home?

9. As you reflect on this experience for the children, can you describe any challenges or limitations from participating in The Pencil Project?

10. What other thoughts and reflections do you have about The Pencil Project that you would like to share that we did not discuss?
Appendix D: Adult Individual Interview Protocol
1. How would you characterize your child?

2. How would you describe the learning environment at The Burton School, in general? In Mrs. Academy’s class, specifically?

3. In what ways do you think your child benefited from participating in The Pencil Project last year? Please share some concrete examples.

4. I would like to focus on the social/emotional aspects that you have identified. Can you describe specific examples in which this project allowed your child to understand another person’s situation?

5. Can you give concrete examples in which The Pencil Project allowed your child to shift from being “self-concerned” to “other-concerned?”

6. Can you describe ways that this project necessitated the children to think about dilemma situations where issues of justice, fairness, or caring are prevalent?

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8. Please describe concrete examples that demonstrate the ways the children have used what they have learned from this project in their classroom. In the school community? At home?

9. As you reflect on this experience for your child, can you describe any challenges or limitations from participating in The Pencil Project?

10. What other thoughts and reflections do you have about The Pencil Project that you would like to share that we did not discuss?
Appendix E: Focus Group Interview Protocol for Children
I am interested in learning about your experiences with last year’s Pencil Project. As I am sure you remember many of the students in your class were dissatisfied with the quality of the pencils you received in your school supplies. As you wondered aloud with Mrs. Academy about the problem, the class decided to survey the other 3/4 and 5 classes to see if they had similar concerns. When you discovered that they did, you began by writing to the manufacturer of the pencils. Your project culminated with the delivery of over 1,400 new pencils and some significant changes to the pencil manufacturer. I am eager to hear about the entire experience. But, I’d like to start with a few questions that will “set the stage” for the people who read my research about your project.

1. How would you describe yourself as learner or in other words, how do you learn best? What would this look like if I walked into your classroom?

2. We all know that this is a progressive school. However, not everyone understands what this means. So, how would you describe a progressive school to someone who doesn’t know what it means?

3. Knowing how you learn and what you know about progressive education, what connections do you make with the two? In the classroom? At home?

4. Now that you’ve described yourself as a learner and the progressive philosophy, I am interested in learning about your experiences with The Pencil Project. What were some of the things that you liked about doing The Pencil Project or what do you remember most about this project? Tell me a story or give me an example that illustrates this?

5. When you began this project, I understand that students had no idea that you were going to get 1,400 new pencils. What motivated the class to look for a solution for the low quality pencil? How do you think this project connected to the classroom theme about the “common good?”

6. What does caring mean to you?

7. In what ways did The Pencil Project teach you about caring for or helping others? What makes this memorable?

8. I am going to shift gears. I am interested in knowing what does “doing the right thing” mean to you?

9. In what ways did The Pencil Project teach you about doing the right thing? Tell me a story or give me an example that illustrates this.
10. In the past, we have talked about empathy and perspective-taking. Please describe a specific time during The Pencil Project when you understood another person’s situation or problem.

11. We have talked about caring for or helping others, doing the right thing, and understanding another person’s situation or problem. In what ways have you used these skills in your fourth grade classroom? On the playground? Home? Any other place?

12. How did this project change you? As a learner? School community member? Outside of school?

13. Describe any challenges or things that you didn’t like about The Pencil Project.

14. Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself, your school, or The Pencil Project? If so, what would you like to share?
Appendix F: Adult Emerging Codes: Subcategories and Sub-code Definitions
Characteristics of the Children (CC)

LS: Learning Styles
- Experiential
- Visual
- Verbal
- Artistic
- Through Repetition
- Through Literature

T/P: Temperament/Personality
- Compassionate, Nice, Supportive
- Eager/Enthusiastic, Energetic, Engaged
- Curious, Loves to learn
- Self-sufficient
- Self-actualized
- Timid

Characteristics of the Learning Environment (CLE)

A: Academic:
- Free flow of child-driven curriculum
- Individualized/brings in all modalities of learning
- Thoughtful/intentional
- Integrated
- Authentic
- Each child’s gift (she is a detective)
- Open environment

S/E: Non-Academic (Social/Emotional)
- Relationships (Embracing, Supportive, Loving, Kind, Caring)
- Cohesive/sense of community (Good of whole group)
- Stand up for self/others
- Self-directed/teacher has faith in them
- Teacher listens well/communicative

Outcomes of the Pencil Project (PP)

INTER: Interpersonal
- Working together/collaboration

MR: Moral Reasoning
- Moral dilemma (getting your money’s worth, standing your ground, social negotiation)

EM/PT: Empathy/Perspective Taking
- Taking other people’s perspective (how would the receiver of the letter respond?)
• Worried about others/ empathy (Did they get fired? Were other students unhappy with their pencils?)

**SR: Social Responsibility**
• Engaged
• Have and share your “voice”
• Citizens of the world
• Raises their awareness
• Making changes (on a corporate level)
• Service to others

**PB: Prosocial Behaviors**
• Pencil Project (Hearing everyone’s “voices” - digital story)
• Non-Pencil Project

**OI: INTRA: Intra-personal**
• Pushing through fear/ step outside comfort zone
• Patience/ immediate gratification/ don’t always get what you want

**OA: Academic**
• Fair trade
• Economics (brand loyalty)
• Letter writing/ editing
• Showcase how children learn at the Burton School
• Digital story/ technology skills
• Surveying

**O: Other**
• Prime the pump/ forward feeding them
• Co-educators with family members
• Experiential learning eliminates “labels”
• “Life Lessons”
• Impacted others (a difference outside themselves)
• Engaging in their environment (my actions can influence something)
• Empowered (at their young age they can accomplish something)
• Make a case (make an argument)
• Raised awareness which impacted change
• Help others get new pencils
• We can make a difference
Appendix G: Children Emerging Codes: Subcategories and Sub-code Definitions
Learning Styles and Learning Environment (LS/LE)

1) Quiet/ no distractions
2) Group work
3) Common space
4) Visual
5) Other (pace, welcome, show what you know)

Progressive Philosophy (PP)

1) Fun (field trips, not paper-pencil, active)
2) Groups
3) Community
4) Relationships
5) Tables
6) Other (inviting, self-directed, engaging, “just right”)

Connections: Learning and the Progressive Philosophy (CON)

1) Working with others
2) The level that is right for you
3) Combination teacher/student driven

Liked or remembered (L/R)

1) Video (digital story)
2) Letter writing
3) Empowered (made a difference, they listened to us)
4) Survey
5) Common good/ “the right thing”
6) Felt good/happy
7) The boxes

Motivation (MOT)

1) Helping others
2) Economics
3) Quality of pencils
4) Mrs. Academy (ZPD)

Caring (CARE)

1) Definition (kind to others, worrying about others, helping others, respect for others & their feelings)
2) Relationship with each other
3) Application (town meeting, the survey, sharing the pencils with 3/4’s and 5’s)

“Doing the right thing” (DRT)

1) Definitions (good deeds, helpful, kind, choice)
2) Examples (Pencil Project and beyond)
3) Outcomes (stand up for self and others, citizenship, career/later in life, experience it)

Empathy vs. Perspective (E/PT)

1) Definition (knowing how they feel, putting yourself in someone else’s shoes)
2) Examples (Pencil Project and beyond)
3) Other

Take-a-ways (TAW)

1) Teamwork (the power of working together)
2) Helping
3) Relationships
4) Empathy
5) Confidence

Limitations (LMTS)

1) Not fair
2) Waiting
3) Sound of voice on video
4) Digital story
5) Pencils

3 Significant Processes (SP)

1) Solving the “problem”
2) Creating the digital story
3) Presenting at the Town Meeting.
Appendix H: Coding Worksheet
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Category or Subcode</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
<th>Key Quote</th>
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Appendix I: Description of Research Team Members
Researcher: Felice R. Kassoy

The researcher of the current study is a Caucasian female. She is doctoral student at The Ohio State University (OSU) in Counselor Education. She has been an on-site and university supervisor for more than 5 years for master’s level school counseling interns and practicum students within urban, suburban, and charter schools. She is a licensed Professional Counselor (PC) and has been so for more than 20 years. She is currently employed as an elementary school counselor in a suburban school district near a large midwestern city.

Research Team Member #1

Research Team Member #1 is an Asian American female who completed her doctoral studies in Counselor Education at The Ohio State University (OSU). She has been an intern in a large urban school district in a midwestern city and has supervised master's level school counseling interns and practicum students within urban, suburban, and charter schools. She has taken both qualitative and quantitative research courses. She is a Licensed Professional School Counselor who served as a high school counselor for 9 years in an urban charter school. In addition, she has completed a principal licensure program at OSU and currently is self-employed as an Educational Consultant.

Research Team Member #2

Research Team Member #2 is an African American female who completed her doctoral studies in Counselor Education at The Ohio State University (OSU). She has supervised master’s level school counseling interns and practicum students at an OSU counseling center housed in an urban school in a midwestern city. She has taken both qualitative and quantitative research courses. She is an assistant professor and the director of the school counseling program at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.
Appendix J: IRB Approval
March 25, 2013

Protocol Number: 2013B0081
Protocol Title: SERVICE-LEARNING IN A PROGRESSIVE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM: WHAT DO CHILDREN, STAFF, AND PARENTS SAY?, James Moore III, Felice Kassey, Educational Studies
Type of Review: Initial Review—Expedited
IRB Staff Contact: Jacob R. Sterndale
Phone: 614-292-6526
Email: sterrdale.13@osu.edu

Dear Dr. Moore,

The Behavioral and Social Sciences IRB APPROVED BY EXPEDITED REVIEW the above referenced research. The Board was able to provide expedited approval under 45 CFR 46.113(b)(1) because the research meets the applicability criteria and one or more categories of research eligible for expedited review, as indicated below.

Date of IRB Approval: March 24, 2013
Date of IRB Approval Expiration: March 24, 2014
Expedited Review Category: 7

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

This approval is valid for one year from the date of IRB review when approval is granted or modifications are required. The approval will no longer be in effect on the date listed above as the IRB expiration date. A Continuing Review application must be approved within this interval to avoid expiration of IRB approval and cessation of all research activities. A final report must be provided to the IRB and all records relating to the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 3 years after the research has ended.

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This approval is issued under The Ohio State University’s OHIO IRB Federally Assurance #000006378.

All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website – www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the IRB staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

Steve Beck, PhD, Co-Chair
Behavioral and Social Sciences Institutional Review Board
June 6, 2013

Protocol Number: 2013B0081
Protocol Title: SERVICE-LEARNING IN A PROGRESSIVE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM: WHAT DO CHILDREN, STAFF, AND PARENTS SAY?, James Moore, Felice Kassey, Educational Studies

Request to amend the protocol dated 04/10/13—Add children (permission of one parent sufficient) as participants, add child focus group interview guide, add assent form, add parental permission form, add parent recruitment letter, add parent recruitment phone script, add 15-25 participants (new maximum 40-60), add Brenda Gerhardt as external key personnel.

Type of Review: Amendment #01—Expedited
Approval Date: June 6, 2013
IRB Staff Contact: Michael Donovan Phone: 614-292-6950 Email: donovan.6@osu.edu

Dear Dr. Moore,

The Behavioral and Social Sciences IRB APPROVED the above referenced research.

In addition; the research was approved for the inclusion of children (permission of one parent).

Note that if applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This approval is issued under The Ohio State University’s IRB Federally Assured #0300006378. All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website – www.orrpo.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the IRB staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

Steve Beck, PhD, Co-Chair
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References


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