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IMPLEMENTATION OF A LIFE-SKILL CENTERED TOKEN ECONOMY:
THE EXPERIENCE OF A PEER TEACHER

By

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Teacher Education

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

IMPLEMENTATION OF A LIFE-SKILL CENTERED TOKEN ECONOMY: THE EXPERIENCE OF A PEER TEACHER

Joseph F. Bellak

Department of Teacher Education

Master of Arts

This qualitative study examined how a peer teacher implemented, evaluated, and modified a life-skill centered token economy (LSCTE) model. The LSCTE is a hybrid of various components of token economy models that I have researched and observed. It is a classroom management model designed to help students participate in various roles/jobs that prepare them for community involvement and employment by giving them simulated experiences within a micro-society in the classroom.

A peer teacher volunteered to implement the LSCTE. The findings demonstrated the participant's success with teaching children responsibility and accountability. Some of the benefits of the model reported by the participant included a well-managed and less stressful classroom, which brought her both personal satisfaction and parental praise. The thesis concludes with recommendations and further studies for the LSCTE.

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On a personal level, I would like to thank Dr. Birrell for his diligence and patience with my thesis. I have learned much from his example and I have gained a valuable friend. Dr. Erickson, thanks for your belief in the LSCTE and me. Your consistent encouragement and kind words have been inspirational. Dr. Korth, thanks for your effort, prompt feedback, and recommendations. Brigham Young University is fortunate to have you. Dr. Draper, you are an outstanding leader. Your enthusiasm, professionalism, and personality are much appreciated.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the historical roles of schooling has been to prepare children with life and academic skills needed to compete and succeed in our democracy (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004). Democracies are complex and ever changing. In our day, shifting demographics and increasing immigration (Wrigley, Richer, Martinson, Kubo, & Strawn, 2003) mean that growing numbers of children will enter school with little or no conception of the dominant social and economic forces they will encounter after graduation. Consequently, teachers should prepare children for the realities of life they will experience as adults within a diverse democracy and capitalist economy (Olmedo, 2004). Therefore, it is important for teachers to fully develop proven methods or develop new methods that help children reach their academic, cultural, social, and economic potential.

Three decades ago, a classroom organization and management model was designed to prepare children for a democratic and capitalistic economy. The model emerged in the teacher education literature under many names, though it has long since dropped from the pages of current research trends in teaching and learning. Its disappearance is the result of a shift in teaching philosophy that moved away from rewarding children for appropriate behaviors and school achievement. The model was sometimes called a *classroom token economy model*, though it is adaptable enough to be renamed and modified to fit the needs of the user. For example, Payne, Polloway, Kauffman, and Scranton (1975) created a *currency-based token economy*. Whatever names teachers may have called this system of classroom organization, *token economies* were developed to provide children with extrinsic rewards for school participation,

with the intention of increasing student motivation and participation and decreasing misbehavior and inattention. Simply put, teachers use the models to pay children to behave appropriately and improve academic achievement.

These *token economies*, also known as *token systems* and *mini-communities*, would present students with a *token* (e.g., fake money, plastic chips) for suitable behavior or for the completion of some task or responsibility which would then be traded for reinforcers of good behavior such as baseball cards, candy, stickers, privileges, and positions of power (Reid, 1999). The flexibility within a *token economy system* means that teachers could experiment with this model of classroom organization and social order, modifying it to the particular needs of students and communities. For example, Payne et al. (1975) wrote of a *currency-based token economy* that was specifically implemented to integrate real-life experiences with money. After completing behavioral and academic goals, students were rewarded with imitation money. Students then used the imitation money to purchase passes that gave them the right to do things that they valued, such as cleaning the board or emptying the pencil sharpener.

Besides focusing on improving classroom behavior, *token systems* can be modified to allow children the chance to apply for thoughtfully designed positions of responsibility within the classroom, complete with titles, tasks, and wages attached. For example, by creating an economy and society, the teacher creates a need for student participation. A student banker helps maintain the student bank accounts and promotes understandings of basic economic principles such as check writing, etc. Students learn quickly that bankers are paid well, teaching them basic capitalistic principles and economic realities that common sense suggests are better learned early than later in life.

There are other roles and responsibilities designed to assist with classroom routines and order. Such positions as police officers and judges ensure classroom rule compliance and consequences for more severe infractions, under the teacher's direction. These types of roles give students opportunities to participate in a simulated democracy, workplace, and economy (i.e., micro society) while arguably learning some skills required for each.

Time spent as a simulated student policeman, judge, postmaster, sanitation worker, and other workers in a typical community, may provide students with worthwhile experiences. With proper guidance and rewards, these jobs may provide students with a small sense of the kinds of work these careers might provide. These experiences occur in an environment of peer accountability that gives attention to the common good of the class, notions that may be lost in our increasingly divided society (Birrell, 1995). For many students, these role experiences within the classroom may provide their first exposure to middle class roles, responsibilities, and values, such as the fact of meritocracy and the realities of capitalism (see Payne, 2001).

Participation in these experiences becomes hands-on learning opportunities to develop, albeit on a small scale, some life skills that may help some students enter a higher social class as adults—as well as more fully explore the connection between status and work, wealth and title as they are introduced to these factors in a micro-society that simulates them (e.g., student bankers may be paid more than student trash collectors).

Even though it is a simulated economy and society, children may spend the money in ways they might as adults (e.g., paying taxes, making purchases at a school store, attending a classroom auction). These simulations may be useful to some students who come from poverty or are immigrant learners unfamiliar with our economic system (Birrell, 1995; Payne, 2001).

These capitalistic experiences may be beneficial to help some poor and immigrant children learn the principles of capitalist society and adjust to the cultures of American classrooms (Olmedo, 2004). Future studies may shed light on any benefits of these models to our present day.

Statement of the Problem

I have spent the past eleven years developing a *life-skill centered token economy model* (LSCTE) in schools in Florida and Utah. I now seek to have it established among my team members, one teacher at a time. Before this can happen, I need to examine the transferability of this model with a peer teacher in order to understand the ways in which the model may be effective or ineffective when used by peers.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how a peer teacher implemented, evaluated, and modified my *life-skill centered token economy model*, and if the model provided her with the same kinds of student/teacher benefits I have experienced.

Research Questions

1. What were the short-term benefits to the teacher who implemented this *life-skill centered token economy model*?
2. What were the short-term challenges to the teacher who implemented this *life-skill centered token economy model*?
3. What changes were applied to the implementation of this *life-skill centered token economy model*?

Limitations

This study contended with a number of limitations. The single case study did not allow me to generalize the findings to a larger audience or diverse contexts. Moreover, my bias in favor of this model may have made it difficult for me to collect objective data. In addition, my ability to clearly help the participant envision the model may have hindered the implementation of it. Consequently, I was dependent upon the good will of one volunteer classroom teacher to fully implement the model. She allowed me to intrude in her classroom as an observer, possibly having created even more stress and chaos in this year of implementation and change—which possibly influenced how the model was ultimately implemented.

Furthermore, my research skills were also a limitation, as I am a novice at using qualitative methodologies. However, my committee chair agreed to accompany me during data collection and we used inter-rater agreement protocols during coding and analysis to help overcome this reality. Another limitation was the diversity of the classroom. While this is changing, there was mostly ethnic homogeneity in the participating school, which limited my ability to examine the model with more ethnically diverse learners. A more diverse classroom may have provided data to support further studies on the effects of the LSCTE on immigrants and second language learners.

Definition of Terms

For purposes of this study it is necessary to define key terms for clarity and consistency.

Token economy is a contingency management system which Ormrod (2003) further clarifies the meaning by stating,

... whereby students who exhibit desired behaviors receive *tokens* (poker chips, specially marked pieces of colored paper, etc.) that they can later use to purchase a variety of backup reinforcers-perhaps small treats, free time in the reading center, or a prime position in the lunch line. (p. 312)

Life-skill centered token economy does not have an existing definition. For the purpose of this study, I developed one. The *life-skill centered token economy* is somewhat different than the traditional *token economy* because the *life-skill centered token economy* focuses on and facilitates the development of life skills while reinforcing appropriate behavior and academic progress. A classroom management plan is implemented to somewhat help prepare students for community involvement and employment. Each student is given a job that augments the flow of the classroom routine. This type of collaboration helps students become classroom partners, because “students enjoy performing classroom jobs” (Freiberg, 1996, p. 32).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how a peer teacher implemented, evaluated, and modified my *life-skill centered token economy model*, and if the model provided her with the same kinds of student/teacher benefits I have experienced. This chapter presents a brief historical view of *token economies*, including their origins, promises, and challenges. An explanation of the development of my own model, relevant components, and why I am optimistic about its potential in the classroom is included in Appendix A.

Token Economies

Token economies for the classroom were designed to improve social behavior and academic performance (Naughton & McLaughlin, 1995). However, there are a variety of techniques that are used to implement a *token economy*. A brief history and analysis of *token economies* follows.

Historical Summary

Token economy systems originated in the latter part of the 1960s in an attempt to address behavioral disorders among more socially and behaviorally challenged children (Kazdin, 1977; McLaughlin & Williams, 1988). This system is a type of behavior modification program that relies heavily upon the principles of operant conditioning where behavior change occurs when certain consequences are contingent upon performance (Kazdin, 1977).

After a target behavior is performed, a consequence is administered. Many who embrace operant conditioning principles may view everyday life as a relationship between such things as wages, grades, physical health, and personal happiness as a matter of behavior, which is also a

matter of making best choices. Some religionists may view this as a reap-what-you-plant mindset where actions have intended and unintended consequences, as Skinner long ago argued (Skinner, 1948).

Thus, in this worldview, behavior can be changed for many people by either increasing positive or negative consequences for choices made. Where schools are concerned, *token economies* attend to the inappropriate behaviors in classrooms that typically interfere with the learning process (Higgins, Williams, & McLaughlin, 2001). By rewarding appropriate behavior, operant conditioning theory suggests that children will purposefully reduce behaviors that hinder their learning, if rewarded for doing the right thing—such as staying on task, not disturbing other students, and speaking at appropriate times (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1991).

The success of *token economy* strategies was well documented in the teacher education literature throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Naughton and McLaughlin (1995) noted the success of *token economy* programs in remediating social and academic deficits, as have others (McLaughlin & Williams, 1988). Teachers in regular and special education classrooms expressed positive outcomes from using rewards to shape student behavior (Field, Nash, Handwerk, & Friman, 2004). For nearly three decades, the aforementioned studies have argued the utility of the *token economy model* in diverse learning settings, suggesting that the *token economy model* has the same validity today, as it did 30 years ago.

The *token economy model* is not without its critics. Moore, Tingstrom, Doggett, and Carlyon (2001) discuss some of the challenges of modifying behavior and relationships using external reinforcers. Others (Kazdin & Bootzin, 1972) predicted long ago the high possibility of

treatment nonresponse. Hence, *token economies* could demand much from teachers and may not work with all students (Reitman, Murphy, Hupp, & O'Callaghan, 2004).

Moreover, the prevailing educational theories of one age may not match those of another. Operant conditioning has a host of legal and ethical challenges that were disputed in the 1980s and 1990s that have caused many educators and clinicians to rethink the principles of using rewards or the withholding of them to motivate individual behavior (Higgins et al., 2001).

Token economies and life skills. This is where *token economies* that focus on life skills can be a real, though currently underutilized, asset to children. As they experience real-life simulations that mirror those of the larger, middle class world, students may develop the attitudes and attributes needed to take advantage of all the opportunities provided in our American democracy (Payne et al., 1975).

How token economies may function. In his book, *The Token Economy*, Kazdin (1977) explains the basic premise that supports the concept of *token economies* by stating,

The token economy, as any other behavior modification program, has several basic requirements. The target behaviors need to be identified and assessed, experimental procedures used to evaluate the contingencies must be selected, and so on. Aside from these requirements, there are various features peculiar to a *token system* including selection of the token or medium of exchange, selection of backup reinforcers, and specification of the contingencies so that performance of the target behaviors is translated into points and points can be translated into back-up events. (p. 47)

A *token economy* is a contingency management system that Ormrod (2003) defines as occurring when,

...students who exhibit desired behaviors receive tokens (poker chips, specially marked pieces of colored paper, etc.) that they can later use to purchase a variety of backup reinforcers-perhaps small treats, free time in the reading center, or a prime position in the lunch line. (p. 312)

Charles (1996) refers to a *token economy* as a contingency management system that uses tangible reinforcers to achieve desired behaviors. Contingency management systems use *tokens* for desired behaviors. For example, a teacher may give a *token* to students for raising their hand, walking in the halls, or following directions. The *token* may be a poker chip, fake money, or a marble.

As the *tokens* accumulate, the student can exchange the *tokens* for something that is of higher value to the student. The student may exchange the *tokens* for a toy, pencil, or a certificate that gives the student a special privilege. There are many possibilities for these types of rewards. Teachers can survey students to find out what types of rewards they value. In addition, the teacher can enthusiastically place a value on a reward to model anything from sales techniques to whatever students think is worth placing value on. For example, the teacher can market their unwanted or out-of-date instructional materials as great tools to teach the younger siblings of students.

It is important for teachers to set times for students to cash in their *tokens*. Teachers must take precautions to be consistent with how the *token economy* is implemented, in part, because the students need to gain faith in its fairness and purpose (Charles, 1996; Payne et al., 1975). A host of values can be taught using these strategies.

Shores, Gunter, and Jack (1993) researched the empirical support for *token economy systems* and found overwhelming corroboration of a *token economy's* efficacy when it is properly implemented. Shores et al. (1993) state, "One of the most effective and data-based ways to improve classroom behaviors has been to implement a classroom *token economy*. *Token systems* have been effective across various grade levels, school populations, and school behaviors" (p. 94). Teachers' successes with *token economies* have facilitated innovative ideas with *token economies*.

Currency-based token economy. Payne, Polloway, Kauffman, and Scranton (1975) have written a book about their *currency-based token economy*. The book details ways to integrate real-life skills with money. It proposes a variety of ideas to help teachers implement the model and "simply continues where *token economies* have left off" (Payne et al., 1975, p. 5). They provided strategies to implement the model, explaining how the economy works, and the potential types of reinforcers. These ideas illustrated the flexibility of the *token systems*.

Hail (2000) wrote about a similar *token economy* that he implemented in his classroom. Hail was intrigued and troubled with the students' decision-making processes that affected classroom routines. Upon self-reflection, he shifted the burden from the teacher to the students. For example, to help students become consequentially aware of their choices, the students had to pay *token* money to use the bathroom and to rent their desks. These requirements taught students a truism that their choices affected the retention of their money. As a result, students prioritized their decisions and decided what was important to their needs. This type of classroom environment supports the development of economic life-skills because the student is confronted

with economic choice, and the realization of the connection between limited resources and priority of choices.

Furthermore, Pickelsimer, Hooper, and Ginter (1998) explained that effective communication, a core component of *token economy systems*, builds successful relationships, which leads to the development of a student's self-esteem and self-concept. An increased sense of confidence may be one of the reasons that Payne, Polloway, Kauffman, and Scranton (1975) wrote, "If children are given the opportunity to experience and learn in their micro-society, they will learn to change or adjust to the adult world" (p.12). Such life-skill practice can be beneficial.

An Emerging Model

This section describes the key components of *the life-skill centered token economy* (LSCTE) model (See Appendix A for a description of the philosophy and history of the evolution of the model and Appendix B for further information on the LSCTE model), which stems from years of studying and experimenting with a *currency-based token economy* in the elementary school setting. Personal experiences that have shaped this model will be provided, as well as an explanation of the core components of the model to be implemented in this investigation.

The Core Components of the Life-Skill Centered Token Economy

I have mainly used the LSCTE model with third grade students, but I believe that it could successfully be used in third through sixth grades. Further studies will have to investigate this. The LSCTE model has six key components. They include: (a) creating a micro-society, (b) life skills/developmental assets, (c) economic experiences, (d) job preparation, (e) community/parent involvement, and (f) access to democracy. An explanation of these components follows.

Creating a micro-society. A variety of learning experiences may help students meet their different learning styles, perhaps in highly motivating ways, as learning relates to “real-life situations and issues” (Benson et al., 1998, pp. 118-119) in a micro-society classroom. Throughout the school year, each student is assigned a different classroom job and accompanying task assignment or definition. The jobs rotate every two weeks so that students can have the opportunity to perform each job. Each student is given a job that augments the flow of the classroom routine. This type of collaboration helps students become classroom partners, allowing students to explore the kinds of jobs they enjoy (Freiberg, 1996, p. 32). Dreikurs and Soltz (1990) found that all students want recognition and to feel a sense of belonging. Classroom jobs give the student a chance to “have a role in the community” by providing opportunities to make decisions and practice social action skills (Benson et al., 1998, pp. 59-60).

Freiberg (1996) also believes that “Helping, sharing, participating, planning, and working together are the heart of a cooperative classroom” (p. 33). For example, a student may be in charge of creating the calendar. The calendar job requires the student to use nice handwriting to display the scheduled events of the day, such as times for music, computer class, physical education, and other events that are determined to be significant to the students. In addition, students use the microphone to announce activities to the class, allowing them to practice oral presentation skills, which are helpful to participate in a democratic society by facilitating communication, organization, and participation.

Another example of a student job is the lunch accountant. This child is responsible for collecting the students’ lunch money that is brought in each day. It is important that the lunch accountant accurately records the names of the students who are paying and how much was paid.

Furthermore, the holder of this job takes a classmate with them to deliver the money and to communicate with office personnel about the lunch procedures. This job helps lessen the burden of a teacher's monotonous routines. It also helps school personnel with their daily routines. This collaboration helps build a sense of community.

Life skills/developmental assets. Benson, Galbraith, and Espeland (1998) suggest that developmental assets are resources that children use to help them develop into caring, responsible, and good-decision makers, which are essential life skills. Based on a nationwide survey of 100,000 young people in over 200 communities, Benson et al. (1998) found that certain developmental assets helped children succeed. The forty developmental assets are broken down into two groups called internal or external assets. The categories for external assets include such things as support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time (Benson et al., pp. 4-5). The categories for internal assets include commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity (Benson et al., pp. 5-6). Statistically, they found a correlation with the amount of developmental assets and behavior. If a student had more developmental assets, it created more positive behaviors such as increased attendance and lack of violence.

The LSCTE implemented in this study has the potential to provide students with opportunities to engage in developmental assets and life-skills. The model emphasizes the developmental assets of responsibility, integrity, and honesty reported by Benson et al. (1998). The jobs provide students with opportunities to develop interpersonal communication skills, build community, and develop relationships with adults. These skills encourage moral conduct, which is integrated into the model as students learn responsibility and accountability.

To encourage responsibility and accountability, the model also provides students with roles that develop communication skills and interpersonal competence. The teacher assistants need to work together and communicate so that they can effectively carry out their responsibilities. For instance, when they pass out papers to the class, they have to find the most time efficient way. Students also build new adult relationships as they interact with school personnel. The lunch accountant, librarian, and security must interact with adults to carry out their responsibilities. These experiences with interpersonal communication and human relations are important life-skills for students to develop. Blake and Slate (1993) discovered that it is not only important that adolescents learn how to effectively communicate with others, but the human relationships that occur will affect the adolescents' self-esteem and self-concept.

Along with communication skills, there are a variety of choices that students make within this LSCTE. Students have to choose how, if, or who they will perform their job with. The citizenship and capitalistic schema of the LSCTE provides experiences with decision-making. Students may choose to democratically participate in a petition that changes a classroom rule, and make financial choices when they go to the class store. These types of decisions lead to teachable moments. Dreikurs believes that teachers should invest ample time conferencing and counseling with students about their choices and how those choices affect their peers and classroom (in Charles, 1996). This type of counseling and reflection could help students take responsibility for their actions and gain respect for the feelings of others, as well as increase interaction with and conversation between teacher and student. As a result, the continuous opportunity to make decisions within the LSCTE may have a positive impact on the classroom and the students' character, which is a central aim of this model.

Meeus (1993) found that “achievement and social support by friends in the educational setting stimulated development of occupational identity” (p. 809). The experience as manager and other job titles may facilitate the development of identity. Hence, this system gives all children a chance to experience employment opportunities. Their experience with the LSCTE may help them develop what Benson et al., (1998, p. 202) call a “proper sense” about matters, which is also a proper proportion with regards to problem defining and solving. This sense of purpose and proportion may prepare them to participate in a democratic society.

Other life-skills involved with this model are identity development and developing the student’s purpose in life. This is done as students explore the connection between role identity as defined by work titles and incomes earned, and one’s place within the roles they have for the classroom jobs. They will learn that identity is very much tied to professional opportunities, which they will come to learn is often a component of continuing education opportunities, gender and other factors (Pickelsheimer et al., 1998).

These occupational identity issues can be complex, but the *token economy* gives students the opportunity to experience occupations and receive payment for their successful accomplishment. Within this *token economy*, students of different cultures can be promoted to manager. This gives students “personal power” to give orders, manage peers, and “interact with other cultures” in appropriate ways, which is a key component of learning to succeed in life (Benson et al., 1998, pp. 179 & 197). With this position of authority comes major responsibility and respect from diverse peers.

Part of the respect factor is that managers can be fired, as well as fire, for incompetence, following due process. Students can be fired for not doing their jobs. Interventions precede

firing, so that job managers are taught, under the guidance of the teacher, to deal with people. Thus, students learn that their actions may affect their job. Peer governance can be very effective at encouraging better behavior among classmates.

In the book, *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching* (1990), Sirotnik concluded that “What we do with our children will affect profoundly the physical and moral ecology of the future” (p. 322). The LSCTE may contribute to the moral development of children, because it provides students with a variety of experiences that require moral choices, as responsibility and honesty are associated with all of the jobs.

Capitalistic society. This model provides students with simulated life experiences that may increase their understandings of our capitalistic society, specifically such economic concepts as paying taxes, rising inflation, saving money, as well as consumer demand, law of supply and demand, and budgeting skills. Through daily discussion, interaction, and participation, students have opportunities to prepare for future economic involvement in a capitalistic society by learning to budget and bank, spend and prioritize. These skills may help prepare children for the demands of adulthood.

Students who fulfill their job responsibilities receive rubberstamp money for their weekly work. They keep the money in tack board or poster board wallets, and may use it to buy passes, toys, cards, and other items at the weekly sale in the class store. Sometimes, students save their money to buy expensive items. Occasionally, students choose to save for the semi-annual auction, where students bid on items that are supplied by the teacher or fellow classmates.

The LSCTE model gives students opportunities to deal with some of the unpleasant consequences of a capitalistic society, such as limited resources or market increases, as well as

job loss or higher taxes. Conversely, as they master principles of money management and job performance, students learn how to seek benefits for work well done. They may apply for job promotions and performance bonuses. Basically, the classroom becomes a miniature capitalistic society that necessitates student involvement with money management, community, and government, and explores the relationship between these entities.

Every week, students who fulfill their job responsibilities receive play money. The money comes from rubberstamps that have the appearance of currency from the United States. For example, the penny rubberstamp has a realistic impression of Abraham Lincoln, a year, and the currency motto. The student, who is assigned the banker position, uses an inkpad and money rubberstamps to hand stamp the students' tack board wallets with their weekly wages.

The teacher decides the minimum wage. It may be useful to use a small wage (15 cents per week) at first so students can experience using mental math with small coins. As the year progresses, students can have their wages increased through a variety of ways such as a class petition or a pay raise for effective production. As a result, the increased money amounts provide more opportunities for students to practice making changes in society and to see how increased wages affect their buying power.

Students may receive bonuses for a variety of reasons such as honesty, dependability, and cooperation. This is a direct link to the job world because some employers give performance and Christmas bonuses.

The students can use their money to purchase privilege passes, school supplies, toys, sports cards, and other items at the class store. A designated place in the classroom serves as the class store so students have a visual reminder of the items they may wish to eventually purchase.

The store can be opened daily or weekly, such as on Fridays, which may also be payday. The opening of the store gives the students a great opportunity to learn spending habits, as well as practice dealing with money—including making change.

Students usually look forward to these weekly sales because they enjoy spending the money they have earned. Some students also enjoy bargaining with the store manager, a skill that may help them when they attend garage sales or purchase a car. In a real sense, these class activities become a model of life in a free market society.

By paying taxes, students may learn some important lessons about government, and the need to monitor government by being informed and communicating with elected officials. They may learn the realities of the relationship between tax rates and spending potential. The teacher may place a sales tax on items sold at the class store, or the teacher can collect a monthly income tax. This can simulate factors that influence economic choice and might help students understand how income taxes work in a capitalistic society. Though this is not real money that can purchase anything, the teacher helps students see the connection between personal taxes and public expenditures. Often, students begin to ask questions about the purposes of collecting taxes, and why we hold elected representatives accountable for the expenditures of those dollars. This is an important life skill and component of the model, as well as a means of taking discussions on democracy in many different directions.

Inflation is another capitalistic experience that students encounter as prices rise throughout the year, requiring students to work harder to continue to purchase some of their favorite items. At a certain point in the year, the class store can raise its prices dramatically or gradually—or even reduce them, should supply exceed demand. Again, these are real-life

experiences that students ought to understand, and should help make the mathematics concepts more authentic and relevant.

Students also can learn how to save money for store items that are more expensive. They could learn the valuable lessons of working for something or the security of saving for personal reasons, all of which translates to lessons on self-discipline. Many economic lessons may be learned from experiences of saving money. Some students may even choose to save for the semi-annual auction.

The store manager and the students also experience the law of supply and demand. Prices can be altered to reflect the quantity of store items in relation to the class demand for those items. For example, if there are too many stickers and students are not purchasing them, the store manager can lower the price. If an item is in short supply and it seems to be popular with the students, the store manager can raise the price, just like in the larger society.

Auctions should be held twice a year, or more often if needed. These are typically both entertaining and educational experiences. Auctions should be made as realistic as possible, requiring the teacher to activate some background knowledge of their function and help students to see their purposes and benefits. Here students learn many of the realities of limited resources, gain, privilege, wealth, and such. Some people have more and get more; some just spend more. Winners and losers are as common in life as they are in auctions. So you learn to bounce back, reconfigure your plan, and work for your goal with greater dedication.

Job preparation. As a result of taking appropriate responsibility for classroom jobs, students become owners and managers of classroom routines. They realize that their contributions affect the culture and success of the classroom. Preparation for each job precedes

performance. Often this preparation is a result of student observation of others performing their jobs. However, students also train each other about job responsibilities. When they know what is expected of them, and do their part, their micro society (classroom) runs smoother for all.

Probably one of the most crucial elements to the success of this model is hiring two students to be the managers. The first of these students needs to be carefully selected by the teacher for their maturity, so as to provide appropriate role models at the beginning of the year. And they should be given opportunities to grow as they practice their responsibilities under the watchful care of the teacher. As students come to learn these roles, all may apply and interview for the prestigious and well-compensated position as managers. It is suggested that managers rotate on a quarterly basis, though the teacher has the option of changing or firing managers. The position encourages responsible use of power and privilege.

After going through an application and resume process, two students are selected by the teacher to be the store managers and run the class store. This store is stocked with a variety of school supplies, stickers, sports cards, toys, stuffed animals, etc. These items can be gathered from family and friend donations, or provided by the school or teacher. Students and parents will often donate to the class store, or students can bring items to sell at the store on consignment.

The two student store managers must work closely with the teacher to ensure the items are reasonably priced based upon supply and demand. Furthermore, in a sense, they run the cash register by accepting money and making change. These experiences with economics can be excellent math support opportunities.

All of these job experiences may help students get a sense of what the work world is like. They should learn interpersonal communication, chain of command, and performance

assessment. Furthermore, students who become managers might gain valuable insight and practice on how to manage people and a business in a public setting.

Community/parent involvement. Parents are invited to participate in the LSCTE model, allowing them to understand the kinds of experiences their children are having at school. Parents may discover that discussions about the LSCTE will help them assist their children in learning the skills necessary for life. In some cases, parents and their children may be learning life skills together. The model invites parents to share the various experiences with their children, including attending auctions, helping at the store, and holding discussions about work and life skills. All this allows the children to see how their parents understand and practice these same principles in the larger world.

Parents may also participate in the celebration as their child receives the Employee of the Month award at school. Teachers should recruit sponsors to donate prizes, coupons, or gift certificates for the Employee of the Month. Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, and Kleiner (2000) state, “Schools are partnerships, in effect, between teachers, legislators, parents, and community members” (p. 291). The success of the LSCTE model depends upon the support it is given by parents and the business community. A careful and deliberate attempt to share this model with parents and businesses could have beneficial consequences for all. If parents and businesses are informed about school activities, especially those they believe in, they may more likely support them

Access to democracy. The LSCTE is designed for the teacher to creatively give students realistic opportunities to participate in a democracy. Dreikurs states,

Democratic teachers listen and consider student suggestions. Democratic teachers provide leadership and firm guidance with classroom rules and consequences. However, they allow students to participate in the decision-making. Democratic teachers allow students to choose their own behavior but teach the students that this freedom is tied to their responsibility for their actions. (as cited in Charles, 1996, pp. 89-90)

The democratic ideas presented by the LSCTE are supportive of the above statements made by Dreikurs. Democracy is about the right kinds of participation; there is little room for thoughtlessness or selfishness. By emphasizing these skills, the model supports Freiberg's (1999) notion of Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline (CMCD). Freiberg argues that students ought to be democratically involved with school and to become partners within the classroom. By emphasizing involvement, ownership increases. Thus, the model in this study may increase attendance, improve behavior, and even raise standardized test scores if students spend more time on studies as a means of obtaining *token* rewards. And they should learn that cooperation, caring, organization, and community involvement are essential to personal happiness in a public, democratic setting.

As students experience inflation, taxes, and other challenging experiences, they may at times seek to be engaged in the democratic process of trying to change policies. The model has potential to allow students to challenge policies they feel may be problematic, engaging the entire class in the process of debate. Under the direction of the teacher, rules can be changed with adequate reason and after going through the democratic process of petitions and elections. Students may want to increase minimum wage, for example, or alter how taxes are taken or spent. These are excellent civics lessons and core components of the model.

In summary, life-skill centered *token economy models* proposes to provide flexibility to teachers concerned with giving students opportunities to learn lessons in school that imitate life. These lessons may help youth learn to live in the 21st Century, as well as develop habits and attitudes that may improve their school behavior and academic performance.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how a peer teacher implemented, evaluated, and modified my *life-skill centered token economy model* (LSCTE), and if the model provided her with the same kinds of student/teacher benefits I have experienced. In this chapter, I describe the methods used to answer the questions that drove this investigation.

Instrumentation

The nature of this study and the questions asked required me to engage in qualitative research methodologies. Thus, I utilized grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) protocols in order to examine the implementation of the *token economy model* on site, and to generate theories about the implementation of the LSCTE model that can result in improvements to its transferability.

Qualitative research is arguably unpredictable (Wellington, 1996). Time spent studying a context or individual may alter the purposes of the study. The researcher becomes, by virtue of his or her presence, part of the context (Slavin, 1992). This fact may create serendipitous moments when researchers may be surprised by what is discovered in a setting, which may change the focus and purpose of an investigation. What can be learned from interaction with a setting or individual may cause the investigator to ask questions that he or she could not have considered or imagined prior to the interaction. Hence, what this study set out to do and what will ultimately be reported may differ. This is sometimes unavoidable, and may be predictable when an investigator may be subjectively studying his or her own work through the eyes of a peer (Gorard & Taylor, 2004).

In this chapter, I discuss the research setting and participant, and data collection and analysis protocols, and justifications for using them in this investigation.

Participant

I asked my colleague to carry out this model in her classroom, and she allowed me to study the benefits and challenges of implementing it. The participant has taught with me for two years and she is 57 years old. She graduated from a university in the western part of the United States with a bachelor's degree in elementary education. She is a seasoned elementary school teacher with 29 years of teaching experience. Her entire professional career has transpired in the same elementary school.

Mary, a pseudonym, has 24 children in her third grade classroom, with 18 Caucasian, two Korean, one Chinese, one Taiwanese, one Armenian, and one Hispanic learner. The school, called East Elementary in this study is located in a well-established, middle class neighborhood in the shadow of a university, with which it has a long history of partnering.

The participant was only vaguely familiar with the idea of *token economies*, but was willing to consider learning and implementing the method. She viewed her participation as a means of considering the usefulness of the model for improving teaching and learning, increasing student motivation and decreasing classroom disruptions. As a special request from the school administration, she switched from her well-experienced second grade position to be on my third grade team. I met with her before the school year started and found her to be open to my ideas (i.e., the LSCTE) about third grade curriculum and classroom management. She liked the LSCTE model and volunteered to implement it as a favor to me (for this thesis requirement) and for her own purposes as a teacher new to the grade level.

Design and Procedures

In matters of research, questions determine methodology (Opie et al., 2004). The nature of the questions and purpose of this study demanded qualitative research protocols. The questions asked in this study required the researcher to enter the field to be studied, engage in observations, and interact with that which is under investigation—the peer teacher. Hence, qualitative research placed me, the investigator, in the presence of the investigated in order to answer my inquiries.

This methodology has several benefits and some limitations. For example, by personally observing events, researchers can obtain first-hand experience with the events and individuals observed. Moreover, by experiencing the event studied, even as a casual observer, the researcher develops sensitivities about the thing studied that may result in new understandings and theories. Thus, the generation of theories that are grounded in experience and data are central to my aims, and to the purposes of grounded theory research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) protocols selected for this investigation. By examining how another teacher has implemented my model, I become even more familiar with it through the participant's experience. This process allows me to develop new understandings and theories about the model.

There are limitations to this approach, given that familiarity with the object of study, or by my being present at an event under observation, may influence the outcome and therefore the kinds and amounts of data that can be gathered, and possibly what can be known from an event or experience (Slavin, 1992). This is often unavoidable in qualitative design, especially when examining one's own program while being implemented by another, as in this study.

Moreover, my familiarity with the person under investigation may also prove either to be an obstacle or benefit, as I act in two conflicting roles—one as investigator and the other as trainer of the model. Thus, in this design, I have built in several forms of data to minimize some of these factors, not the least of which will be the favorable opinion I have of the model going into the study, and to reduce bias as much as possible in reporting the findings.

One of the ways I avoided over-influencing the outcome while participating as investigator of my own model was that I allowed the participant almost two-thirds of the school year to implement the LSCTE before I entered her classroom to collect data. At the beginning of the school year, I presented the core principles and components of the model and then removed myself from the implementation process.

I remained available to answer implementation, programmatic, or philosophical questions, but otherwise left her to implement the model as she saw fit. In March, I began data collection on how she developed the model and what benefits were perceived, as reported by the participant. I conducted interviews that explored the experience of implementing the LSCTE.

Research Questions

Three questions guided this study that examined how a peer teacher implemented, evaluated, and modified my *life-skill centered token economy model*. The questions included:

1. What were the short-term benefits to the teacher who implemented this *life-skill centered token economy model*?
2. What were the short-term challenges to the teacher who implemented this *life-skill centered token economy model*?

3. What changes were applied to the implementation of this *life-skill centered token economy model*?

The answers to these questions have implications for understanding the transferability of the model, as well as the appropriateness of implementing the model with other peer teachers at my school.

Data Collection

Two of several primary data sources for this study included the classroom teacher and myself. Beginning in March of 2006, I left my classroom once a week for four weeks to observe Mary as she employed the LSCTE model. Each of the four visits were held at different times of the day and different days of the week, and were approximately one hour in duration. I observed her holding a sale, interacting with classroom managers, engaging in payday activities, and transitioning from class instruction to job duty activities.

I recorded these observations through field notes. After each observation, I engaged her in a recorded interview where we discussed the observations, along with her understandings of the model and impressions about its effectiveness that day and overall. All four interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Also, I kept a running log of theoretical memos, which consisted of me speaking into a tape recorder after each observation. The purpose of these memos was to capture my impressions of what was happening. This methodology allowed me to go back and identify the ways in which my observations were biased by familiarity with the model, and my desire to see the model succeed.

My thesis committee chair agreed to participate in two of the four observations and compare field notes and impressions in order to assist me with a second set of eyes that may not be as potentially biased as mine might be. Our conversations also became a data source. Thus, by engaging in recorded participant interviews, field observations, theoretical memo making, and joint observations and discussions with a second observer, multiple forms of data were available from which to learn about the implementation of this model in the classroom of a peer teacher.

Data Analysis

For this investigation, I used grounded theory protocols (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to analyze the data. Specifically, each interview was transcribed. Transcriptions were to be completed within three days of each interview. Each transcription was coded by developing a set of categories that reflected the meaning of statements made by the participant.

With the help of my thesis committee chair, we collaboratively coded the first two and final transcripts to generate categories of meaning. The categories emerged as my chair and I examined what the participant was saying, and what terms captured the meanings of her statements. We then ascribed a name and definition to each category, modifying those definitions as needed throughout the study.

This process of refining the categories as new data are collected is called constant comparative analysis (Powell, 1992). In constant comparative analysis, as data are collected, categories are developed according to the interpreted meanings of participant and other recorded statements. As new data are collected and analyzed, old categories are redefined or replaced, accordingly.

Field notes were also analyzed for salient events that validated the emerging categories. Theoretical memos and personal reflections and other post-observation conversations with my chair were transcribed in order to locate ideas and impressions that further illuminated the findings. Collaboratively coding most of the transcripts and conversations acted as a shield against bias. This method of inter-rater agreement helped me to ensure that my impressions of the data were true to the data sets collected, and increased trustworthiness in reporting the findings.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

This study explored the experience of one peer teacher as she implemented my *life-skill centered token economy (LSCTE) model*, examining from her perspective the benefits and challenges of executing the model, as well as any changes she made in the model. Nearly all the data presented in this chapter come from participant interviews. These interviews followed classroom observations and focused attention on her classroom instruction and student interactions, and the ways she talked about both in the context of the LSCTE.

The sections in the chapter include: (a) Mary as a learner, (b) benefits to Mary, (c) benefits to students, (d) challenges to Mary, and (e) changes Mary made in the program. These sections represent the six categories that emerged from data analysis, and provide a framework for presenting the findings.

Mary as a Learner

Mary, not her real name, has been teaching for 29 nine years. Despite having taught nearly all-elementary grades, Mary considers herself first a learner and then a teacher. With respect to her reasons for learning a new program at this stage of her career, Mary said, “I’m one of these people that are always trying out new things, and trying to find new and different ways. I am always reinventing the wheel.”

Mary had another reason for considering this program. She had just shifted from teaching second to third grade. This encouraged her to be more responsive to the need to learn new things as a teacher, and she was very concerned about age-appropriate curriculum. She said, “The

children are older. I felt like they needed more accountability so we could run our classroom a bit smoother.” Observations of her interactions with students confirmed her belief that as children aged they should take on increased responsibility was strong in Mary. She constantly stressed personal responsibility and individual duty during observations of her interactions with children.

Thus, Mary was looking for new ways as a teacher to develop new habits of responsibility in her students, or as she put it, “take the monkey off from my back and have them put it on theirs, by having them think about things before I have to say something about it.”

Anxious to discover ways to encourage student responsibility, Mary eagerly explored and participated in this model when asked to take part in the study. She said,

I had seen that Joe was doing this...and that he had a model in his classroom. I was kind of asking him about it. Then he asked me if I wanted to help him with this study, and I thought that this was the answer that I’ve needed. This will create a better learning environment for the children.

To Mary a better learning environment was one where students were fully engaged in the learning process, or “taking appropriate responsibility” for their growth. When asked about the importance of teaching students to be more responsible, she recalled how parent attitudes about teaching had changed over the years, which she noted had a negative impact on student achievement. She said that a change in some parent attitudes about a decade ago meant “parents did not want to help children with homework.” Without parental support, Mary noted that some children may not attend to their studies, as they should, especially homework.

Furthermore, as Mary indicated, changes in parental attitudes about helping children were accompanied with changes in society that resulted in the need for teachers to “teach moral

values, such as learning to work,” as she put it. To Mary, personal development was a moral endeavor.

Mary saw this model as a way for her to “connect,” as she put it, core principles of moral clarity with personal responsibility, principles that she saw as central to effective classroom management and student achievement. Mary knew that successful classroom teachers sometimes must cope with the reality of non-supportive parents. Nevertheless, as Mary asserted, you do the right thing even if “parents don’t agree. In the end, and years down the road, they come back and say, ‘oh yea, that was good.’”

Nearly three decades of teaching had made a dedicated learner out of Mary. She often spoke of the relationship between teacher learning and teacher effectiveness. Mary said that she appreciated the challenge of helping children develop morally as well as intellectually, and saw them as inseparable. To Mary, developing the quality of responsibility was central to realizing human potential. I saw this belief realized in the various ways she constantly affirmed children during my observations when they met her expectations, and even when they didn’t.

As the children understood this relationship between acting responsibly and developing personally, Mary noted some of her teaching beliefs and values during the interviews and professional conversation. Mary seemed to have strong beliefs with student responsibility and their unlimited capability. The genesis of these beliefs, according to Mary, came from her mother who taught her that if she “hitched her wagon to a star, I could do anything or be anything I desired.”

During July of 2005, I found out that Mary was going to become a member of my grade level team. Having experienced the frustration and challenges of grade level changes, I went to

Mary and welcomed her to the new team. I asked if she had any questions about the new curriculum, which led to a conversation of my classroom management and innovativeness with curriculum. She noted a willingness to see and implement my routines with homework and mathematics.

Mary was willing to implement the LSCTE in order to help me with the study and to learn new ways of working with students. Mary noted that she had already been contemplating the use of monetary rewards for her students. She said, “When I came to school and Joe approached me on this, I thought this is my answer that I’ve needed to get going.” She agreed to take part in this study, and exclaimed, “I felt like it was a welcome thing to have.”

Benefits to Mary

To make the LSCTE user friendly, I supplied Mary with a LSCTE training package that included an easy-to-use guide to the LSCTE plan (see Appendix B). The guide contained brief job descriptions and ideas of how to implement the program. Mary was pleased that she had the guide to refer to and stated, “I was so glad because to sit down and think that all out would have killed me off. I was glad that he had that already to go.”

The LSCTE training package was designed to lessen the burdens of teaching. The training package was supposed to save time and energy because teachers would not have to spend the time finding and making the materials needed to implement the LSCTE. It was supposed decrease the stress of starting something new. In essence, the LSCTE training package was designed to ease the teacher’s transition into a new classroom management program. Mary noted that she was pleased with the training package. Mary stated, “I wanted it simple, I didn’t

want it complex.” Mary went on to say, “Because it was simple to use, I don’t think I really had a frustration implementing it at all.”

Mary believed that increased student accountability is one of the key benefits of the LSCTE. Ideas that promote student accountability and responsibility are as important to Mary as a teacher as they are to children as learners. For example, Mary claimed, “while I have learned a lot from doing this, I have especially liked the accountability that the children have had.” “The more responsible students are the easier my job becomes,” she noted.

Part of learning accountability is developing honesty. Mary felt that some of the jobs also promoted honesty because they required collecting student lunch money and delivering it to the school office. Mary would comment on how student honesty was central to personal responsibility. She made a connection between students performing their jobs and completing their work, and talked of improving behavior. While using LSCTE, Mary found that, “It just helps me manage it [the class] better and helps the students be able to take that responsibility. Everything goes better.”

With regards to the implementation of the LSCTE, Mary found that, “It caused me to think at times,” which is core to self-reflection and professional development. Mary was a thinker. She was constantly thinking about ways to link school content and the LSCTE. And she spoke of how increased thoughtfulness and self-control would make a positive impression on visitors, as students “learned better self-management.” This was especially true of parents who visited Mary’s classroom and have commented on the benefits they have “seen from the jobs and class store.”

Another benefit Mary has found from using the program is that it “helps de-stress the classroom.” For example, when students were efficiently performing their jobs, Mary found that she could better interact with the students knowing that somebody else was taking care of some of the responsibilities that Mary was used to doing as a teacher. “I know when I come into the classroom that I have children doing their jobs, so what I am doing is monitoring rather than managing, and have more time to help individual students.”

Lower stress for Mary means, in part, not having to remind students as often to complete their responsibilities or to get on task. Mary found that the LSCTE helps students monitor one another, which also encourages student responsibility. Mary said, “I’m not the one always saying, hey you got to get this done; hey you got to get that done. I’m no longer nagging at people.” She noted how a calmer teacher often results in calmer students.

In short, Mary found the LSCTE to “be very helpful” so much so that when she transfers to second grade next year, “the program is going with me,” she noted. Then Mary added, “Every teacher could benefit from the LSCTE.” She has even shared its benefits with other teachers. Mary noted that some school colleagues had approached her and wanted to implement the LSCTE next year within their classrooms.

Benefits to Students

Each observation of Mary demonstrated her commitment to encouraging responsibility. Mary spoke of the ways that parents and society are not doing all they can to raise children, or teach them responsibility. Hence, the LSCTE has given Mary, as she noted, opportunities to teach and discuss real-life experiences with her students that she feels parents may neglect in their busy lives. Mary saw this as a real benefit to children.

One value children need that made the LSCTE appealing to Mary was its opportunities to explore the use of money, including ways to earn, spend, and save it. When students perform their roles well, they receive payments of simulated monies for their efforts. With that simulated money, students are able to make purchasing choices at the classroom store.

Mary explained, “Students have a wallet to keep the money they earn. They have the opportunity to come and shop at the store on Friday.” Students who are assigned to be store managers set prices for items such as school supplies and toys. Because some items cost more than a student can earn in a week, some children learn the discipline of saving for a desired purchase.

Mary said, “Some students have chosen not to buy anything; they’ve saved up for some stuffed animals and things like that.” This experience of self-denial until one has sufficient resources to pay helps students learn about the concept of saving and also some of the rewards of work, concepts that were very important to Mary. She asserted, “Students are saving and spending, and they enjoy it.” She noted that in a credit-saturated world, teaching students self-denial can be beneficial, and that such lessons are better learned sooner than later.

The LSCTE has brought other benefits to her students. For example, one student was the bathroom monitor and would check the bathroom for cleanliness. The child was checking the restroom for cleanliness right after the custodians had cleaned it. He quickly realized that this was not the best time to check the boys’ bathroom. Consequently, he decided to check the bathroom at a different time to give a more accurate portrayal of how his male classmates were doing with restroom cleanliness.

Moreover, the boy realized that there were other classes that used the bathroom, and that his peers cannot entirely be responsible for what goes on there at all times; still, he often reminded the class that they could do a better job of monitoring their own use and cleanliness, as Mary explained. She also noted how this student had demonstrated increased pride in his work and encouraged greater caring among peers in the school community.

Mary spoke of a strong commitment to promoting community and equality among her students, which she believed the LCSTE helped to foster. She knew that boys and girls were equally capable of success in life, and that part of that success was learning how to get along with everyone, including the opposite gender. Mary said, “I insist that we’re not girls and boys, and resist boys just playing with boys and girls just playing with girls—we’re all everybody.” Mary noted that she wants boys and girls to be able to get along and to work together without the traditional boy-girl problems that hinder elementary teachers.

Moreover, Mary has found that children are sometimes reluctant to be paired up with the opposite gender. However, she believes the LSCTE has helped with that problem, as students learned to work together on jobs and tasks. “We haven’t had the problems of boys and girls not cooperating this year, because we started out right with [LSCTE] at the beginning of the school year.”

Students have also benefited from the fact that “we’re looking outside ourselves a little bit and helping each other, rather than being only concerned with themselves,” as Mary noted. “We’re all in this together,” she added. Evidence of this “togetherness” was seen in the ways that one particular student in Mary’s class used the microphone system to praise and encourage, saying “that we can do just a little bit better here or there.” Mary said she uses positive student

comments to start class discussions about issues of responsibility and areas for improvement. Students would contribute to this sense of safety and honesty as they further reminded one another of their individual responsibilities. Mary pointed out one girl who sometimes, when a peer was not doing their part, would politely ask, “Would you please do it?” This way, Mary explained, students would “learn to help each other and give encouragement where it might be needed.” As compared to years past, Mary said, “I think this group just works better, and are a more congruent group.”

Another way that Mary feels she is more effective at helping students learn and grow, as a result of the LSCTE model, is in cultivating their oral presentation skills. Each week students would speak into a microphone while giving an account of their efforts for the week, even if they did very little. Mary was quick to note the benefit of developing speaking and listening skills, as well as making eye contact while speaking.

She said, “Students have learned to speak in a microphone, to talk loud, and they have learned to look into the eyes of the audience. This has been helpful to one of my second language learners.” She was speaking of an Asian student who, according to Mary, took “the whole year to feel confident speaking publicly.” Mary was optimistic that the LSCTE may provide opportunities to meet a variety of learning needs and styles.

In short, students have benefited from the increased sense of community, collaborative encouragement, and as Mary put it, “looking out for each other.” For instance, the class as a whole could earn the Golden Shoe award from their physical education teacher for behavior and encouragement. Mary’s students were concerned about winning this honor. When they did not receive it, one student commented, “Well, we’ve just got to work more together and work harder

when we get down there at P.E.” Mary said, “So, they’re all trying to do that, and the benefits of the program are playing out in all different areas.”

Challenges to Mary

Mary said that she found few challenges implementing the program, in part, because the LCSTE was easily modified. She stated that she could easily adapt the program to fit her needs and the needs of her students. To minimize challenges in the LCSTE, Mary said she just “kept it simple.”

She did note some challenges. For example, Mary had difficulty with the job rotation. Mary rotated jobs weekly so that each student would have the opportunity to experience each position. If a student did not perform the job, she sought to keep the child in that position until the student satisfactorily improved the job performance. Mary wanted the student to be responsible enough to get it right before the student could move on to the next job. When students had to skip a rotation, she noted that her system was frustrated, and so was she.

Mary also had challenges with the class store. The class store is stocked by a variety of school supplies, stickers, sports cards, toys, stuffed animals, etc. The students can use the money they have earned from their classroom jobs to make purchases from this store. The store is usually open on Fridays, which is also payday. Mary said that students look forward to these weekly sales because they enjoy spending the simulated money they have earned. However, she cannot abide the noise and chaos that often accompanies these shopping sessions. Mary explained, “The store problem is driving me nuts, them being so noisy on Friday during the sale, but we’re working it out.”

Mary noted that sometimes she just cancelled the sale on Fridays because of the misconduct of the students. She added, “I would not cancel the store every Friday, but there have been some days that they’ve been so noisy I couldn’t handle it. So we just had to say no store this week.” Moreover, the store presented her with other challenges. In the beginning of the LSCTE implementation, her class store had very few items. Mary was not sure what items would be good for the sale; thus, she had several questions for me that we explored together, sometimes mingling my roles as researcher and mentor.

Changes Mary Made in the Program

In the beginning, Mary often referred to the starter guide I had developed for her. “I had to refer to that quite frequently until I figured the program out. But it was not any trouble at all. In fact, it was nice to have it and to be able to follow it.” Mary said that once she understood the basics, she could “refine” the job descriptions and procedures “just a little bit more for my needs and how I like to teach.” Mary frequently noted with appreciation the flexibility of the LSCTE. She remarked that this flexibility made program adaptations much easier.

Mary also appreciated the training package that was formulated to keep her from spending too much time creating supports for the LSCTE, allowing her more time for implementation and reflection. She added, “The materials were helpful, as was the time we spent going through them.” Because she did not have to spend so much time developing the materials provided in the LCSTE packet, Mary noted that she could spend more time rethinking ways to improve the program, was not afraid to make changes, and she felt less stress.

Mary reacted positively to encouragement to make needed changes in the model and stated,

Joe went through and showed me how the program worked, went over all of the descriptions with me, and said you can change this if you want. And you know what, whether he said it or not, I was going to. It just has to fit my needs. The great thing about Joe is that he said this is how it is, but change it the way you want.

I did not always understand why Mary made some of the changes she did, and we would discuss them following an observation. For example, my LSCTE model suggested that students be “fired” if they do not meet the expectations of the job; however, Mary disagreed with this, preferring to leave a child in a role “for two more weeks,” as she explained.

Mary saw this change as a more positive way to encourage student performance. She clarified, “If students have a struggle with a responsibility then they’re back there again working it out.” Working it out also referred to a student’s ability to give oral presentations. As discussed previously, students are expected to report on their job performance each week into a microphone and in front of the class.

This was not an original LCSTE component. Mary made this adaptation to encourage public speaking skills, and to teach students to praise one another. She added, “After each student reports, the class is to say a positive word as they are doing their jobs, and make a positive suggestion if they are not. Those that are in need of encouragement receive it, also.”

This addition to the LCSTE has increased a sense of peer support and accountability, which Mary said she highly values. She added that such times provide children with

opportunities to engage in democratic principles of peer accountability and public support as they learn to encourage and assist one another.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study explored the experience of one peer teacher as she implemented my *life-skill centered token economy* (LSCTE) *model*, examining from her perspective the benefits and challenges of executing the model, as well as any changes she made in the model. In this chapter, I discuss my conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of this study as they relate to the original questions of the study:

1. What were the short-term benefits to the teacher who implemented this *life-skill centered token economy model*?
2. What were the short-term challenges to the teacher who implemented this *life-skill centered token economy model*?
3. What changes were applied to the implementation of this *life-skill centered token economy model*?

Benefits and Challenges to Mary

One of the primary benefits Mary sought for by implementing the model was to reduce the stress of teaching, particularly learning to teach a new grade. She understood that increasing student participation would likely result in fewer stresses for her. This “taking the monkey off her back” was a means of placing responsibility where it belonged. Her years of teaching had demonstrated a truth that teachers with fewer years of professional experience may not always understand. The less a teacher has to be in control of student learning, because students are

willfully engaged in their own learning, the more effective and enjoyable the learning environment can be (Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCintio, & Turner, 2004).

One of the ways the LCSTE helped manage stress for Mary was that the model was flexible. Mary had power to change it. The ability to change a program increases a sense of ownership during change (Fullan, 1993). Programs that allow flexibility also allow individuality, and given the idiosyncratic nature of teaching, such programs may promise more to teacher growth and student achievement than more rigid programs.

Mary was quick to provide anecdotal evidence of the ways the LSCTE also benefited students. Her comments that the group had more unity than previous groups she had taught may be a result of a greater sense of community that the LSCTE seeks to promote. The program stresses the importance of individual responsibility as one of the key components of common unity or community (Freiberg, 1993; Freiberg, Connell, & Lorentz, 2001). That Mary was experiencing degrees of success with LCSTE, including a reduction of stress which was allowing her to give more individual attention to students, was also a benefit to her as a teacher. That parents were also noting positive benefits from the model further resulted in a greater sense of efficacy in Mary and an increased confidence in her continued use of the LSCTE.

The model was not without its challenges. As the data demonstrated, programs must be adapted to the individual needs of those it is intended to serve. Problems of maintaining order during the shopping hour or providing materials to be purchased are concerns Mary expressed.

While Mary appeared to have a degree of buy-in from all her students, as she never expressed otherwise, and I never observed student resistance to this model, there may be cases in which the program will not be effective with every child. While there is no evidence of such

failure in this study, the possibility exists—a possibility Mary may have overcome because of nearly three decades of teaching experience.

The findings suggest that the benefits of the LSCTE model overcame any concerns expressed by Mary. While these findings cannot be generalized beyond this case study, Mary's experience does suggest some benefits of the LCSTE to teachers and students that ought to be given merit. Like with any program, it is difficult to tell the degree to which program success is the result of the program or the teacher implementing it. The findings of this study suggest that both teacher and program were working effectively because Mary noted that the training package met her needs. Moreover, she valued the responsibility and accountability that the LSCTE offered the students. This success may be the result of a match between Mary's beliefs and aims as a teacher and the principles and strategies contained in the LSCTE. This match may not exist with other teachers who implement the model at my school. Thus, as more teachers implement the LSCTE at school, I will need to be alert to this possibility.

Changes to the Model

The findings of this study reveal that Mary made arguably few changes to the LSCTE as I presented it to her. However, there were some changes that Mary made. For instance, she did not fire students who under performed with their roles and she rotated jobs versus assigning them. Mary's insistence on students performing their jobs correctly before they could rotate was different than the training package guide. It poses an interesting perspective on how teachers might react to a student's failure to meet the goal of responsibility. Moreover, it may be a realistic experience because management and owners handle their employees differently as well. Mary also had each of her students talk on the microphone as compared to the recommendation

of three students that was suggested by the training package guide. Mary wanted all of her students to have daily practice with oral presentation skills. This caused me to reflect on possible changes to my program.

Mary was comfortable making change. Given that she is changing grade levels again next year, this quality may serve her well. She is already considering how to modify the program for a new grade, which is an invitation to continue the present study.

Mary believes her second grade students will benefit my classroom when they come to third grade. I have never taught students who were familiar with the LSCTE. This possibility brings up many questions, and could lead to some interesting action research.

Other Recommendations

Mary claimed she had more time to interact with students because she did not have to worry about routines she used to perform because students were attending to them. Another study could analyze one year of classroom management for a teacher, and then have the teacher implement the LSCTE the following year. This would be done to compare the time the teacher interacts with students on a one-to-one basis. Smaller class sizes increase one-to-one interaction, therefore the questions would ask, does the LSCTE also help increase one-to-one interaction in larger classes?

Future studies might examine how diverse minority children could gain personal, social and academic skills, as well as peer connections through the successful use of the LSCTE. It may be very difficult to enter the school system of a new country and assimilate to its culture and government. Consequently, immigrants and diverse minority children may be at a cultural disadvantage when they engage in the capitalistic activities of America. Moreover, their parents

may be having the same struggles. Mary stated that a second language student benefited from the LSCTE. A study could look at the possible benefits of the LSCTE in diverse schools, and analyze if it could be a tool to help students assimilate to American culture. The LSCTE is structured to help students understand government and interpersonal relations. These may be factors that help students participate in a democratic society.

Summary

I learned that for Mary, the LSCTE was a useful program for helping her meet her goals as a teacher. In the process of studying how Mary implemented the LSCTE, I found benefits and challenges in the transferability of the model. I found that the changes and adaptations made by Mary often enhanced and individualized the model to her own personality and needs. Ultimately, the LSCTE deserves continued study and implementation to determine its effectiveness as a life-skills and management model.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

My Teaching History

Introduction

In this study, I mentored a peer teacher as she implemented my LSCTE model, with the purpose of exploring the short-term benefits and challenges of the model, as well as any changes she made in the model during implementation. And I sought to understand if the model provided her with the same kinds of benefits as I have enjoyed as a teacher.

For the past 11 years, I have been developing the LSCTE based upon personal research and classroom teaching experiences. The LSCTE has evolved over the years and, I believe, still promises much to helping teachers increase academic performance and reduce student disruptive behaviors. I do not pretend to escape bias or be a dispassionate observer in this investigation. By having a peer teacher implement the LSCTE, I am able to investigate not only the transferability of the model but also the value of my own beliefs about the benefits of this strategy. In a sense, this examination is also a form of self-study, as I contrast my own experiences with those of my peer.

The LSCTE is a culmination of ideas that were implemented throughout my professional teaching career. To understand the true seeds of development, I must reflect on my belief system. There are several educational events that have impacted the way I teach children. Most of my life I have critiqued my teachers and made mental notes of the kind of teacher I want to be. These beliefs have emerged into my teaching as I have continuously reflected on personal K-12 classroom and my own teaching experiences. The positive memories and entertaining experiences have made a lasting impression that affect the way I teach.

K-12 Relevant Experiences

Teacher educators have long held that K-12 experiences are primary influences on pedagogy (DeWitt, Birrell, Egan, Cook, Ostlund, & Young, 1998; Lortie, 1975; Powell, 1992). These studies contend that early schooling experiences are initial and powerful determinants of what teachers do—and don't do, how they think—or fail to think, and how they respond to students—or fail to respond in more useful ways.

My belief system has been founded upon various events that have been negative and positive, as a child and teacher in classrooms. In my case, these experiences are numerous, as no single event or set of events has had a primary influence on my emerging beliefs as an educator. One of the more salient influences was the time I spent attending Riley School in the small community of Marengo, Illinois. The school enrolled approximately 200 students from kindergarten through eighth grade. When students reached the fifth grade, classes were divided in half to help reduce class size.

This small-town educational environment provided nurturing and lasting memories that influenced my beliefs about the LSCTE. For example, my kindergarten teacher's name was Mrs. Schultz, and she was very popular with the students. However, I never made an emotional connection with her, but I felt her popularity was partly due to her nurturing teaching style. One lesson she taught me was about sharing. I did not want to share my toy cars with a student named Matt, but she took the time to explain to me why it was important to share. Her patient effort to teach me what was right had lasting effects. I did not like the admonishment at the time, but I will always remember the moral lesson. I have used her example and applied it to my students

with the LSCTE. When a situation of conflict occurs, I take the time to explain it to the students on their level. Democracy is about sharing.

Mr. Day was a fourth grade teacher. I remember that he was extremely kind and he gave students piggyback rides. However, one day he made a comment about my painting because it was another baseball picture. I was working on our big solo art project on an easel, and he asked, “You are not going to draw another baseball picture, are you?” This question has impacted how I respond to the interests of my students. I encourage students to creatively express themselves and respect art and handwriting as an objective talent. This experience affected my belief system and how I manage the classroom with the LSCTE. When students suggest ideas or make choices that are contrary to the norm, I use this past experience to try and understand it from their point of view. That is why I allow change, should students find something about the classroom rules or routines too problematic.

Baseball was my life as a child, and I am sensitive to the interests of my students. I make an effort to be patient with their interests even though they may not connect to my beliefs. By providing them with multiple job opportunities, I seek to help them discover some of their interests within the configuration of the *token* society.

During the sixth grade I had an enthusiastic science teacher that motivated me to do well. Mr. Loy made his science class entertaining and educational. He was wonderful with his body language and dramatics. His dramatics for expressing disappointment in a non-threatening way and his sense of humor have impressed me for a long time. For example, he would use facial expressions that were amusing but got his point across. Moreover, Mr. Loy expressed his love for teaching with his Super Science Students! He was so excited about the success of his

students, and I have tried to carry that passion with me in the classroom. His enthusiasm has led me to model the LSCTE in an engaging way for students to become active learners in the classroom. I often mimic some of his facial expressions to make children laugh and keep them guessing about what I am going to do next. In addition, I will make positive comments about how great they are to teach. It seems this has a tremendous effect on the class morale. In a sense, I become an entertainer and a salesman for the right reasons, which is to sell my students on the importance of education and humor, responsibility and fun—which are core components of the culture this model creates.

Finally, the biggest impression a teacher had on me was a history teacher, Mr. Hilton. His enthusiasm has stuck with me since the first grade. Mr. Hilton was the basketball coach for my brothers, and he made me feel so good about myself when he saw me in the halls. Furthermore, his history classes were so interesting because of his enthusiasm and sense of humor. He would play competitive review games for tests, and that really excited me to do well. To this day, review games are a part of my classroom, and most students love to participate. He would act out commercials and tell jokes to the students. He was a master storyteller, and his students would spread his exciting stories before I could have a chance to hear them. This suspenseful story telling is integrated into my model as I share information about society and the ways these roles shape our world.

Relevant Professional and Life Experiences

Athletics can be extrinsically motivating because of its immediate reinforcement. Having a background in sports, I became interested in the motivational aspects of teaching. I often wondered how I could bring motivation to the school environment. As I began my student

teaching, I discovered the *token economy*'s significant impact on improving student behavior and performance. Upon reflection, my emerging beliefs about *token economies* began with no recollection of its usage in my schooling. Consequently, certain challenges of academic and cultural diversity confronted my ideological thinking and I needed thoughtful reflection to take careful direction with the implementation of *token economies*. The following experiences helped to create a pattern of thought and interaction that I continue to use in my teaching practice.

Internship experience. In the spring of 1995, the LSCTE started to take form in my mind during my student teaching experience in Des Plaines, Illinois. My mentor teacher, Mr. Curtis, had jobs for about twelve of the twenty-three students. He would rotate them, but it bothered me that everyone was not involved with the jobs. It was simply a question of fairness that caused me to think of how I could get all of the students involved. I felt it was not fair or consistent to only have part of the class working on part of the jobs. I saw potential with a class job model that rotated tasks and created opportunities. Consequently, I made a goal that all students could experience all jobs, if they wanted to, when I became a teacher.

My first year of teaching witnessed the fruition of this goal. However, the LSCTE was in its infant stage, and it basically just had jobs for students with no rewards or incentives to perform their duties. The model had far to go.

Professional experience. In the fall of 1997, I had a very difficult third grade class and I struggled with classroom management. I was on the verge of an early retirement out of teaching. However, when trials confront me, I am forced to adapt. Fortunately, a friend suggested I pay the students with rubberstamp money to reward students for their classroom jobs. She had enjoyed the model as a child in school and was able to tell me of her specific experiences. Her ability to

remember the model so vividly is a testament of the ability of this model to create motivation. As a result of her suggestions, I began to use stickers, sports cards, homework passes, and friend passes for the weekly sales.

As the job descriptions became more detailed and students had more difficulty remembering their responsibilities, I saw a need for a manager. This student was responsible for some of my duties, such as ensuring that others were performing their jobs. I became tired of reminding students about their responsibilities. Consequently, the manager did this for me and reported any problems, which reduced problems. The manager encouraged students to be responsible by recommending raises and promotions, and such—or firing. And they had to learn to do this respectfully.

After a few months, with a successful manager in place, the class could function independently and the morning routines flowed smoothly. However, I ran into problems one year where a student was abusing their power and they had to be fired. This was something not expected because of the requirements for a manager. Consequently, I had to reinforce the notion of effective management and communication where managers did not abuse their power.

Furthermore, I decided to hire two managers so that they could work together to have a system of checks and balances.

The following year, 1998, I spent more time developing the model by creating a decorative job chart. I used the computer to create labels for the jobs and students. They were placed on neon colored index cards so that name cards could easily be rotated through the jobs. Furthermore, the size of the class store increased because more items were donated or found for students to purchase. Sometimes the store was stocked by student donations. The idea of an

an auction came to mind as a fun way to end the year for the students. I used the microphone of a karaoke machine to role-play the auctioneer. The students used their wallets to signal their bids. Some students painfully learned that sometimes they could not get what they wanted because they could not outbid others. The excitement of these classroom activities made me realize the benefits of the auction.

As time went on, I realized that students had a hard time remembering their jobs. Consequently, I decided to rotate jobs every two weeks so that students could adapt to change more readily. Furthermore, I reinforced the notion that students should train each other if they were not sure what their responsibility was with their jobs. This helped lessen my burden of classroom management, and it helped students become more independent. The theme of independence became another cornerstone of the model. As a result, I continued to augment independent thinking and encouraged students to make their own decisions.

Student Benefits

Students may experience many benefits through the implementation of the LSCTE. A careful analysis of its application may bring about experiences that go beyond the normal expectations of a regular classroom. Thus, it is important to discuss these benefits and how they may positively affect the lives of the students.

Diversity. I often chose students of cultural diversity or girls to become managers. This was the direct result of my studies in sociology, which revealed a need for all students to have access to success, something marginalized groups may not have experienced in some settings. I had learned in my Sociology of Racism class that some students of diversity just did not have

textbook pictures and illustrations or real-life examples with them that depicted they could earn positions of power. Thus, I made certain that equality was built into the model to honor diversity.

Real-life experiences. Another concept that helped students experience real life situations was the idea of firing students for not doing their jobs. Although it seemed harsh, it was a realistic consequence. Students need to face the reality of losing a job if they cannot meet the demands of responsibility or dependability. However, due to the developmental level of the students, the firing would only last for the duration of the job rotation, meaning that they could re-apply for the position later. Furthermore, the students received several warnings before action took place. If they were fired, other students were anxious to take their jobs because they would receive double pay. Nonetheless, students who were fired were given the opportunity to talk it over with me, and I explained the situation in a non-threatening way and told them they could prove themselves with the next job.

Economic experiences. As I constantly self-reflected upon the model, I discovered that economic lessons could derive from the real-life experiences with a classroom store. In order to provide more mathematical lessons with money, I decided that students should receive raises for their weekly pay. I also gave bonuses for outstanding character and work habits. I did this because I felt employers do the same thing for their workers when they are proud of their efforts and accomplishments. Students became excited when they received raises for their jobs. Students brought up an interesting query. They asked, “Why can’t we earn more money?” This caused me to ponder the model and think of new ways to integrate real-life experiences within the model.

I let them know that they could also bargain for the prices, a skill that would help them in their futures. From my years of experience, I have often seen children spend money foolishly and people take advantage of them. This surely must follow some into their adulthood.

To ensure understandings of supply and demand, I noticeably increased prices after the Christmas break. Students would come back and find out they could not afford items from the class store. After hearing their objections, I would challenge them to come up with solutions for overcoming these problems. “What are you going to do about it?” was a favorite question of mine, teaching them of the need for participation in both their economic and democratic lives.

Access to democracy. Students gained access to democracy because the LSCTE provided them with opportunities to help understand how their government works. I would guide them along a petition process that would increase their wages. One student even suggested striking, but I carefully guided them towards the procedures of government and commended his creativity. I asked the students to put together a petition. We discussed what a petition is and how citizens use petitions to change laws. So the students organized themselves and signed a petition to raise their wages.

Next, we discussed how a law was passed. We role-played the government process with the branches of government. I had students role-play each of the parts of the law-making process. The law had to be passed in the House of Representatives and Senate, and the President had to sign it or veto it. After the President signed it into law, I would represent the corporations of the United States and try to overturn it in the Supreme Court. However, I lost with the judges’ decision. Nonetheless, the experience was great for the children, and it became an integral part of the LSCTE.

The idea of taxes came from a Social Studies unit on taxes and community. I felt students would learn a great lesson about our government by collecting taxes on a monthly basis. I explained that the taxes would be used to purchase books, schools, government buildings, roads, etc. This was not received well, but still taught them a valuable lesson of how our infrastructure and government depended upon the revenue generated from tax dollars. We would have taxes collected once a month at a 25-percent rate. Around April 15, I would require additional taxes to provide connections for the students with other IRS realities.

In 2005, I took the tax model farther by adding up the taxes that had been taken out and using that information to see if they had paid too much for taxes and deserved a refund or if they still owed money. Some students had more money because of bonuses, being managers, and selling me items for the class store. As we went through this process on April 15, I felt that students experienced something very realistic. The students who had accumulated more money had to pay more taxes, and I felt that the students truly benefited from this real-life experience.

Community Involvement

Fortunately, during the summer of 1999 I was employed through the Summer Industrial Fellowship for Teachers program that provided teachers with employment through the space industry companies. I worked for a company called Sverdrup in Cape Canaveral, Florida. This company was responsible for the quality assurance of rocket launches. I was given time to create projects to help my school, and this was the time I needed to further the LSCTE. I was able to develop a project that helped me receive an award for teaching excellence from the Brevard County School Board.

This was the summer that the ideas started to emanate because of the time I had been given to work on the model. One of the themes that came forth was to attach more real-life experiences with the LSCTE. I wondered how could this model benefit society? During the summer, I created form letters and a PowerPoint presentation for local stores and restaurants. My purpose was to recruit sponsors to donate prizes or coupons for the Employee of the Month. Stores and companies recognize employees, so I felt students should receive their own recognition for their hard work.

I mailed the letters to the specific head managers of seven stores and I individually met with four of them to explain the model. The managers were impressed because of how the model was designed to create better workers, and their donations were very charitable. Their interest made me see a bigger picture of what the model could do for society. My intentions were to give something back to the community by encouraging values that these managers desired from their employees. I asked them what their needs were so that I could reinforce them. Often teachers ask for donations but nothing is given to the community in return. I wanted to give something back. Moreover, to show appreciation for their efforts, I gave them framed certificates that noted their community participation.

This was special for the student and great for community relations because I was preparing students to be responsible and dependable workers. Some students had the opportunity to meet the donating business manager when they redeemed their coupon. The student also received a certificate of achievement. We had two employees of the month because I chose one Employee of the Month and the students chose the other. Nonetheless, the focus of this project became to prepare students to be responsible citizens and respect their community and

employers. The goal of the model was building a strong foundation based upon principles of a cooperative society.

Parent Involvement

In 2004, a parent suggested rotating managers through the year and I found her suggestion to be intriguing. Now, I choose managers on a quarterly basis to give eight students the opportunity to develop leadership, though the model can be modified to give all students managerial experience if desired by the teacher. Everyone has an equal chance but receiving the more coveted positions depends upon attendance, behavior, responsibility, and effort. Students can apply for the jobs and interview for them. This experience is enjoyable and rewarding for the students and me.

Contextual benefits

Another reoccurring theme over the years is that substitute teachers and parent volunteers have liked the model because students help them to understand the routines of the classroom. Some substitute teachers have felt more comfortable with my classroom because the student-managers are organized leaders that the substitute teachers can depend upon. The model has contributed to my reputation as a very structured teacher with outstanding classroom management. Annually, parents annually inform me that they enjoy the model, and parents feel that it helps their children become more responsible and dependable. All of these concepts have contributed to an ever-growing model for the LSCTE.

Summary

In this review, I have presented three intersecting bodies of literature about teacher beliefs, peer mentoring, and *token economies*. And I have described the model to be

implemented in this study (see Appendix B for complete description), as well as a brief history of the evolution of my thinking about *token economies*, and the influences of K-12 school experiences and professional and life experiences on the model.

The review of literature shows that *token economies* may be useful in helping to motivate student learning, provide status within the classroom, supply simulated real life experiences that teach the principles and provide the rewards of success and accomplishment, encourage democratic governance and collaboration, and create environments of responsibility and accountability, all essential elements of effective learning and living in America for the 21st Century.

Appendix B

Life-Skill Centered Token Economy

Introduction

A *life-skill centered token economy* (LSCTE) is somewhat different than the traditional *token economy* because it mainly reinforces life skills rather than behavior and academic improvement. Each student is responsible for a class job that augments the flow of the classroom routine. As a result, the students become essential components of classroom routines in which successful collaboration is affected by the efforts of the individual student. These experiences guide students in a way that promotes discovery learning where they make connections with their real lives and may use these experiences to develop self-confidence and societal awareness.

Purpose of the Model

As students and teachers collaborate to implement this classroom management plan, valuable experiences evolve to help prepare students for future employment. Furthermore, the management plan provides a variety of hands-on experiences such as interpersonal communication, democratic involvement, and student interdependency. Moreover, it provides many economic experiences that develop budgeting and purchasing skills. Money management skills are fundamental to succeeding in a capitalistic society. These skills are essential components of participating in a democratic society, and thus may be revered for their real-life connections that can be made in a seemingly secluded classroom environment.

Important points of implementation. There are several things to consider during the implementation of this classroom management plan. However, there is no recipe to the success of this model because it heavily relies upon the enthusiasm and dedication of the teacher. It

depends upon how the teacher persuades and guides the students to take control of the LSCTE. Like with anything new, it will take time and patience to implement the model. The rewards of a successful implementation will have academic and social benefits for the students. Furthermore, the community and parents may begin to see education in a whole new way and this should positively affect your reputation.

Including Parents

Parent letters and open house opportunities should be utilized to communicate the vision of the LSCTE. Since the classroom management plan is established to develop life-skills and academic experiences, there should be ample support. It is important to invite parents to participate in the classroom management plan. Parents should be encouraged to discuss their work experiences with their children, and provide examples of career opportunities. Furthermore, parents should be encouraged to orally present their career information and experiences to the class. Exposure to these experiences can help students visualize their potential and give more meaning to their education.

Community Involvement

The teacher may wish to choose one Employee of the Month; the students may choose one, or you may do both. Teachers should recruit sponsors to donate prizes, coupons, or gift certificates for the Employee of the Month. Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, and Kleiner (2000) state, "Schools are partnerships, in effect, between teachers, legislators, parents, and community members" (p. 291). The success of a program depends upon the support it is given. A careful and deliberate attempt to share the classroom management plan with local

businesses could have beneficial consequences. Often businesses are asked for money and donations, but they receive little feedback about their generous donations.

This LSCTE teaches several character traits that business owners desire for their employees to have. For example, students are taught responsibility, dependability, and teamwork. Consequently, this classroom management plan gives something back for their donations. The classroom management plan prepares the students for the work world, and the students may one day work for these businesses. If properly communicated, businesses can catch the shared vision and sponsor the LSCTE.

The student should also receive a certificate of achievement that delineates Employee of the Month. Next, the student can be invited to get his certificate signed by a business manager and redeem the coupon. This may be a special experience for the student, and it may build community relations because of the interpersonal communication and appreciation. Furthermore, the business manager may wish to sign the certificate so that the student can build a portfolio of accreditation. Often teenagers seek employment but they have no experience or references. These certificates of achievement may be effective tools to aid their employment search.

Work and Jobs: Roles of a Capitalistic Society

The common belief by American society is that the public education system is supposed to prepare students to participate in the work world (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004). The LSCTE helps prepare students for the roles they may take in our capitalistic society.

Hiring for jobs. Probably one of the most crucial elements to the success of this model is hiring two students to be the managers. These students need to be carefully selected and given opportunities to develop with the responsibilities. The teacher may even consider having students

create a resume or fill out an application for the manager position. Most students enjoy the manager position because they earn twice the amount of money that other students earn. Furthermore, the student managers feel empowered by the job title and its delegation privileges.

One reason to consider for this position is the additional responsibilities and time that is taken to achieve the mastering of this crucial position of authority. The managers cannot unethically use their positions to bully other students. As a result the managers need to have a good report with their peers and know how to direct students in a positive and affirmative manner. They need to have withitness and a knowledge base of all the positions. Student managers should be hired after several weeks of school so the teacher can observe and assess academic, interpersonal, and character development. As previously mentioned, it is important to give minorities and students with learning disabilities the opportunity to succeed as managers. Research supports the benefits of identity development through career choices.

The managers can support the teacher in a variety of positions that warrant responsibility and maturity. This can be invaluable to the teacher's classroom management and routines. Teachers should put more and more trust into the students as the year progresses, and eventually the teachers may witness the students efficiently managing the smoothness and flow of the classroom. Consequently, substitute teachers may comment about their respect and admiration of the teacher's classroom routines. The classroom can become an independent and democratic society of collaboration and autonomy. The benefits are part of a life-long learning process that will enable the students to have access to society's possibilities.

The manager positions should be rotated about four times throughout the year to give students the opportunity to succeed. These students should have good attendance and be prompt to school because most of the classroom management model occurs at the beginning of the day.

Rotating jobs. Jobs should rotate every two weeks. This gives the students a chance to do all the jobs throughout the school year. A job chart is beneficial to keep track of the rotation. A bulletin board or a large sentence strip holder would be ideal for holding the index cards that are labeled with students' names and the jobs. The pocket chart makes it convenient to rotate the jobs every two weeks.

Firing students. As difficult as it may be, students should be fired from their jobs for not demonstrating appropriate responsibilities. However, there should be patience and caution with this procedure at the beginning of the year because the students have to buy into the system and accept it as their contributions to the welfare of the class. Nonetheless, if a student is fired, the teacher needs to hire another student and pay that student double until the two-week rotation has finished. As in real life, students should be given opportunities and warnings before they are fired. If the student is fired, the teacher should talk to them about the situation. The teacher should inform the student that they would have another opportunity to redeem themselves and prove themselves to be responsible and dependable because we all make mistakes. Teachers should be cautious but not hesitant to fire a student from their job or as a manager. The loss of a management position is permanent whereas a class job is just for the two weeks or pay periods; or when the job rotation occurs.

Jobs and Descriptions

There are many jobs that teachers have created for students to help with the routines of the classroom and to lessen the monotonous responsibilities of the teacher. For example, erasing the board and emptying the pencil sharpener can become redundant and wasteful when you consider the time management of a teacher. The following descriptions of classroom jobs are only a loose interpretation of student responsibilities. They are brief to aid the ease of adaption to the LSCTE because it is designed to be user friendly. Moreover, teachers are free to adjust the job descriptions to meet their needs, and if necessary, create new jobs.

Attendance. The student is responsible for recording attendance and following the particular procedure that the school or teacher has established. This will depend on the technology of the school, but there are a variety of ways to establish this position.

Athletics. The student is in charge of signing out recess and sports equipment to other children. This will lessen the occurrence of lost equipment because students are held accountable by the sign-out sheet. Furthermore, a consequence may be that the student cannot sign out equipment for a week.

Bag control. Bag control is responsible for maintaining an orderly environment for the backpacks. They need to be kept on the hooks or properly attached to the back of the student chairs. They should direct the students to properly take care of the backpacks and keep aisles and hallways free of this safety concern.

Banker. The student is responsible for paying students with the rubberstamp money on payday and for bonuses. It is important that on payday, the banker pays students in an orderly fashion so that students cannot claim that they were not paid. Furthermore, this is a position of

trust and misuse of the money should result in serious consequences. Some students have tried counterfeiting money by pressing it on the other side of the wallet.

Bathroom monitors. This job assignment is for a boy and girl. The bathroom monitor is to make sure that the students in the bathroom are behaving appropriately, using the facilities properly, and not wasting time. There are a lot of behavior problems that occur in the bathrooms so the bathroom monitor needs to be given the power to have a student recommended for a consequence. If the students do not properly respond to the bathroom monitor, the teacher loses crucial class time dealing with discipline procedures. This is a position of power and the teacher must support its purpose to effectively work.

The bathroom monitor may also be given the classroom power of permitting students to use the bathrooms. This saves a lot of tedious questions that the teacher receives through the day. It also gives more power and responsibility to the class.

Board eraser. The board eraser is in charge of immediately responding to the teacher's request to erase the board. This saves time for the teacher and prevents the teacher's back from being turned to the class. The board eraser is also responsible for doing a thorough cleaning at the end of the week. This job assignment is a popular job and students should be encouraged to erase quickly.

Caboose. The student is responsible for being the last one in line at all times. This is an important safety issue so that students are not left behind or alone. If an issue arises, the caboose is to immediately contact the teacher to provide information about the incident. This is particularly effective for field trips and unpredictable students.

Calendar. This student is required to use a whiteboard to delineate the scheduled events of the day such as birthdays, specials, time changes, and other special events that are pre-determined to be significant to the students' day. The writing can also be used to help with grammar lessons. In addition, the student should use the microphone (from a karaoke machine, if available) to announce these activities to the class, and this gives the student the opportunity to practice oral presentation skills, which are essential to participate in a democratic society.

Comedian. The student uses a pre-selected joke book that is morally appropriate to select a joke of the day. This is done on the microphone system after the calendar announcements. The comedian asks the joke question and can select two students to answer before the correct answer is given.

Computer technician. This student is accountable for all computer software and hardware questions. The computer technician has the daily responsibility of turning the computers on and off. This minimizes the daily tasks for the teacher and helps the students develop problem solving and trouble shooting skills. This position can also help retrieve items from the printer, thus saving the teacher from another monotonous routine.

Desk patrol. This job assignment saves the teacher much stress and time managing student desk organization. Every morning, the desk patrol checks each desk to see if the students are properly organizing their desks the way the teacher has established. For example, all papers go into folders, and the textbooks and workbooks are neatly organized. Desk patrol can have a checklist to check off students who have trouble with organization, and the desk patrol person can also be the daily reminder for students to keep their desks organized. The daily checklist is

an easy organizational grade reference. However, much care should be taken at the beginning of the year to demonstrate proper organizational skills.

Door holder. Often a safety and routine concern, this student is responsible for holding the door open for the class. Furthermore, the door holder is responsible for closing doors to help with sound control, energy savings, and safety. The door holder is the second person in line and the teacher may need to assign help for the door holders or have the door holders choose friends to help.

Ecologist. The student is responsible for monitoring water usage at drinking fountains. To eliminate problems, the student can have a pre-determined count and be in charge of pressing the button on the drinking fountain. The ecologist is also responsible for watering classroom plants and animal habitats.

Electrician. The student is responsible for turning the lights on and off in the classroom. The electrician should be at the end of the line with the caboose when leaving the room and next to the line leader when entering the room. The electrician is also responsible for plugging in electric devices such as projectors, laptops, and computers. This can physically aid teachers. The electrician and class should be taught safety with electricity at the beginning of the year to prevent dangerous circumstances.

Environmentalist. This student is responsible for finding and properly disposing of litter throughout the halls and school grounds. Their efforts should be consistently rewarded and environmental safety connections should be taught. Furthermore, the environmentalist is responsible for making sure the classroom is neat and orderly. The environmentalist has the power to order students to clean areas where they may have left a mess.

Filer. The student is responsible for filing student papers alphabetically in the file cabinet. This helps the students and teacher build a portfolio of schoolwork, and it helps the student with organization and alphabetical skills. The filer should choose a partner to help with the process.

Librarian. This student keeps the class library in order and may be in charge of the sign out and sign in procedures. Furthermore, the librarian may return or gather materials from the library to aid teacher instruction and to save time.

Line leader. This assignment is helpful for time management. An effective line leader moves swiftly through the school to get to the designated places. The line leader looks to the teacher for hand signals to see if they are permitted to proceed.

Lunch accountant. Another student is in charge of the students' lunch money or lunch count. The job responsibility is to collect the money and checks that are brought in each day. It is important that the student accurately records the name of the student who is paying. Furthermore, they have to take a student with them to securely deliver the money to the office. They have to effectively communicate with the office in order for the next process to take place. This gives the student a chance to experience trust, interpersonal relations, and responsibility.

Lunch boxes. This student is responsible for maintaining organization of the lunch bag and box area. If need be, they are in charge of bringing the lunch crate back and forth from class to the cafeteria. Furthermore, they are responsible for making sure that students do not leave their lunch boxes in the crate. This prevents rotten food and mold from occurring.

Mathematician. The mathematician helps with all assistance needed for math class. For example, they control the flash card lessons and pass out math manipulatives.

Operator. This student is responsible to professionally answer the phone and direct the call to the proper recipient. Furthermore, the operator delineates messages for the teacher or for students who are not present to take the phone call.

Pencil sharpener. The student is responsible for emptying the pencil sharpeners and keeping a fresh supply of sharpened pencils.

Postal service. Postal service is responsible for making sure letters and important information that need to go home are delivered to each student. They pass out the information at the end of the day and keep track of any additional items that are put into the mail bin by the teacher. This assignment is very difficult for children to remember.

Recorder. The responsibility for this student is to write things on the board when instructed by the teacher. For example, they may keep a tally table or write assignments on the board. This gives the teacher greater flexibility and allows the student to experience data and writing skills.

Scientist. The scientist is in charge of maintaining science centers and equipment. They also assist the teacher during science experiments.

Security. Like bathroom monitors, teachers need to assign a boy and girl. Students should not travel alone through the school and security helps with this. They can take students to the nurse, office, or to another teacher. They monitor their escorts and report any problems. Furthermore, security can transport items to the office or to other teachers.

Stapler. This student is responsible for stapling and organizing papers. Furthermore, they keep track of the stapler and students have to ask the stapler if they can use it. This saves the teacher from unnecessary requests.

Teacher assistants. Two students are selected to these positions and are accountable for assisting the teacher in a variety of measures the teacher deems warranted. For example, they help gather and pass out assignments. As a pair, they can effectively be used to randomly complete maintenance assignments and tedious work that wastes instructional time. For example, if stickers are given as rewards, these students can be trained to take over this time-taking duty.

Trivia host. This student uses the microphone system to pose a trivia question to the classroom. The trivia question should be academically based and provide time for students to collaborate on the answer. As a result, oral presentation and cooperative skills are derived from this experience.

TV/media specialist. The student is in charge of the maintenance and the turning on and off the TV, VCR, and DVD player. They are also responsible for inserting video and selecting channels.

Store managers. Two students are selected to run the class store. This store is stocked by a variety of school supplies, stickers, sports cards, toys, stuffed animals, etc. These items can be gathered from family and friend donations. Students and parents will often donate to the class store. Furthermore, students can sell items to the store where they can learn the process of bargaining and bartering.

The two students must keep a check and balance system of trust and money management. This should be modeled by the teacher at the beginning of the year and used as a reward for students who have demonstrated positive character traits. The teacher should run the store so children can learn by the teacher's example. Although it is difficult to sometimes determine the value of items, it should depend upon the demand and the amount of money they have earned.

Working in and Contributing to Society

In a democratic and capitalistic society, it is reasonable to expect a participant to engage in employment for the purpose of earning money to support the individual needs such as shelter, food, and transportation. Hence, money becomes a key factor in understanding how to survive and succeed in a democratic and capitalistic society. Thus, the LSCTE provides a variety of experiences where student engage in economic negotiations.

Pay day. Every week, students who fulfill their job responsibilities receive play money for their job responsibilities. The money comes from rubberstamps that have the appearance of currency from the United States. For example, the penny rubberstamp has a realistic impression of Abraham Lincoln, a year, and the currency motto. The student, who is assigned the banker position, uses an inkpad and money rubberstamps to hand stamp the students' wallets with their weekly wages. The wallets are about four by eight inches in size, and they are made with a sturdy material such as poster board or tack board.

The minimum wage is up to the teacher. It may be useful to use a small wage (15 cents per week) at first so students can experience using mental math with small coins. As the year progresses, students can have their wages increased through a variety of ways such as a class petition. As a result, the increased money amounts provide more opportunities for students to practice making change and bargaining for their price.

Bonuses. Students may receive bonuses for a variety of reasons such as honesty, dependability, and cooperation. This is a direct link to the job world because employers give performance bonuses and Christmas bonuses. These should be used sparingly but effectively.

Sales and purchasing power. The students can use this money to purchase privilege passes, school supplies, toys, sports cards, and other items at the class store. A designated place in the classroom serves as the class store so students have a visual reminder of the store items that they wish to save money and eventually purchase. The weekly sale usually takes place on Friday, which is also payday. The sale gives the students a great opportunity to experience skills that will help them in their lives as consumers. Students look forward to these weekly sales because they enjoy spending the money they have earned. However, students may have to save up until the following week to buy more expensive items. They also enjoy bargaining with the store manager, which will be a skill to help them when they make purchases as an adult. In this sense, the class becomes a miniature model of a capitalistic society.

Paying taxes. One goal is for students to be able to explain how taxes affect their income and purchasing power. Depending upon the complexity of the teacher's intentions with the LSCTE and the students' conceptual framework, the teacher may charge a sales tax, an income tax, or both. For example, the store could have a sales tax or the teacher may collect a monthly income tax. Teachers may collect the taxes by crossing out the students' money with a permanent marker.

As a result, students may begin to ask questions about why the teacher has to collect taxes. This is a known as a teachable moment for the classroom because taxes are a part of society that the students cannot escape and will continuously experience throughout their capitalistic lives. Hence, it is important for the teacher to take the time to explain why we have to pay taxes and where the money goes. It will also help students understand how taxes work and the importance of paying taxes to help our democratic society. Furthermore, teachers may also

wish to have a tax day on April 15. Within the capitalistic society, some students will earn more than others. Based upon a tax schema, teachers and students can calculate taxes paid and owed. Students can experience receiving tax refunds or paying additional taxes. Again, this schema depends upon the conceptual framework of the students.

Inflation. Inflation is another capitalistic experience that students may experience. At a certain point in the year, the class store can raise its prices dramatically or gradually. Students may begin to realize that their income does not adequately meet the prices from the store. As a result, the teacher can guide the students through a discovery learning experience. Students should be guided to real-life experiences that are presently occurring and ask or teach them how they can democratically be involved.

Petitioning and changing the law. As students experience inflation, taxes, and other challenging experiences, they may be guided to explore democratic processes that enable them to change laws. Students may start to complain and become frustrated, and they sometimes may even suggest going on strike. However, teachers should carefully guide them to understand the democratic process of petitioning and passing laws to increase minimum wages and other laws. Students may become excited about the possibility, but they may fear how the teacher is going to react. It is important to discuss the significance of their democratic rights and what they can do to change things that they perceive to be unfair. As a result the students may go through a dramatization of how a law is passed through our federal government. As a result, they may become aware of their democratic rights as citizens.

Saving money. Students may also learn how to save money for store items that are more expensive. They may learn the valuable lessons of working for something or the security of

saving for personal reasons. Many economic lessons may derive from the experiences of saving money. Some students may even choose to save for the semi-annual auction.

Supply and demand. The store manager and the students also experience the law of supply and demand. Prices can be altered to reflect the quantity and demand of store items. For example, if there are too many stickers and students are not purchasing them, the store manager can lower the price. If an item is in short supply and it seems to be popular with the students, the store manager can raise the price.

Auctions. Auctions should be held about twice a year and utilized as entertaining and educational experiences. They should be made as realistic as possible, and some background knowledge should be used for the students to make connections with the schema. There are a variety of lessons that can be associated with an auction. For example, supply and demand can easily be applied. Furthermore, the social experiences can be challenging and life-changing. One reason for this is that some children may experience wanting something and not having enough money to purchase it.