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THE EFFECT OF VALUE INSTILLING LITERATURE
ON ELEMENTARY AGED CHILDREN

By

ERIKA PELLO

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching
The Graduate School
Rowan University
06/01/00

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved

June 28, 2000

ABSTRACT

Erika S. Pello, The Effect Of Value Instilling Literature On Elementary Aged Children, 2000, Dr. Randall Robinson, Master of Science in Teaching, Rowan University.

In order to determine the effect of lifeskill instruction on the decision-making skills of third graders, a study was performed in a southern New Jersey elementary school. The sample consisted of approximately forty third grade students between the ages of seven and ten years old. The students in both groups were initially pretested with an opinionnaire, which included twelve multiple-choice questions. Lifeskill education was later incorporated into the curriculum for Group A only, which served as the experimental group for the study. Both classes were then posttested. Two t-tests were performed to determine whether there was a significant difference in the results of the test. The experiment indicated that there was a significant difference in the decision-making abilities of students who received lifeskill instruction as opposed to those who did not.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Erika S. Pello, The Effect Of Value Instilling Literature On Elementary Aged Children, 2000, Dr. Randall Robinson, Master of Science in Teaching, Rowan University.

A study was performed to determine the relationship between lifeskill education and the ability of third grade students to make wise and respectable decisions. The results of the experiment demonstrated that there was a significant effect on students and their decision-making skills after they were exposed to value instilling literature.

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CHAPTER 1

SCOPE OF A STUDY

Introduction

According to W. Huitt, character development is one of the most critically important aspects of child development. Parents and teachers have long believed that it is one of their major responsibilities to ensure that the children in their family or in their classroom are instilled with high moral and ethical standards. Once internalized, these principles for living form the basis of a child's character. This, in turn, is the major determinant of all his future behavior (Huitt, 1999).

As Donald Biskin and Kenneth Hoskisson point out, schools have recently neglected to formally educate students on issues of morality for fear of offending some students. There has been great debate over this issue. As these two authors write in their article, "Moral Development Through Children's Literature," decisions about moral issues are made every day in schools all over the country, and it is not realistic for schools to be uninfluential regarding these decisions. Teachers and other individuals who work with children are realizing more and more that important decisions must be made by the child himself and, therefore, it is the schools' responsibility to help children develop ways of making useful and sound moral decisions (Biskin & Hoskisson, 1974).

As evidenced in the writings of Sharon Begley and Claudia Kalb, character is developed by behavioral observations a child makes on a moment to moment basis. It is shaped by the words of praise or censure from teachers, parents and peers that a child's

actions give rise to. The upright behavior of a child's role models are extremely important in shaping his own ethical behavioral standards (Begley & Kalb, 2000).

Charles Haynes explained in "Character Education in the Public Schools," the direct observation of desired behavior in a respected individual such as a teacher is clearly accepted as an effective method of instilling respectable qualities in a student (Haynes, 1993).

Biskin and Hoskisson write that psychologists, such as Piaget and Kohlberg, have given support to the idea that individuals do interpret their lives in relation to narrative works (Biskin & Hoskisson, 1974). As demonstrated by the study done by Narvaez and Bentley, this certainly is true in adults who have already developed basic character traits. It would seem intuitively correct that this characteristic would apply to children with less well-developed moral standards, and should actually enhance their ability to develop high standards of virtuous behavior (Narvaez & Bentley, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between lifeskill instruction and the ability of third graders to make caring and responsible decisions. According to Darcia Narvaez, one might ask, how effective is exposure of children to moral stories in establishing their character? Do children view these stories as abstractions unrelated to themselves, or do they internalize the values promoted in the stories and, thus, enhance their personal character development (Narvaez, et.al, 1998)?

Statement of the Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study was that third grade children who received literature with lifeskill instruction would score significantly higher on decision-making skills than those third grade children who did not receive literature with lifeskill instruction.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations of this study. For example, the time constraints and environment in which the test was administered may have positively or negatively skewed the results. Due to the fact that the students and teachers were confined to the tight schedule of the school year, only one pretest and one posttest could be given to the participants. Also, the posttest was administered the day before spring break. As a result, many of the students seemed distracted and disinterested in the test.

The small sample size and the narrow socio-economic diversity of the subjects limit the reliability of the test. The school at which the study was being implemented consisted of a rather homogeneous group of students. If the study were performed in another district, there would have been more diversity among the students and the questions would have been answered differently. For example, students from one cultural background may have been more inclined to answer a question a certain way due to their upbringing and learned experiences. Also, the classes in which the test was being given were small, consisting of only about 20 students each. If more subjects were involved, the data might be more representative of the population sample because there would be more people involved.

The time allotted for the study was also a limitation. Given only a few weeks, the subjects may not have fully internalized all of the material being taught. If more time

were allotted, more literature could have been provided and the students might have gained more insight into the content area.

Similarly, the strong background knowledge of the subjects regarding the subject material may have also been a limitation. While this could have been helpful, it could also have caused the students to answer the questions dishonestly since they were aware of what was expected of them. Children in another district who have received less instruction during the course of their academic career may have answered the survey in a different way.

Definitions Of Terms

The following sentences define words that are relevant to the study in consideration:

Moral- concerned with the judgment or instruction of goodness or badness of character and behavior.

Value- a principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable.

Lifeskill- a form of behavior which enhances an individual's ability to move through life by displaying morally and ethically upright conduct. Examples are flexibility, responsibility, integrity, initiative, and perseverance.

Lifeskill instruction - the teaching of those behaviors which help to shape an individual's actions and develop his or her character.

Decision-making - the process of making choices that guide an individual through life.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In order to determine whether the instruction of lifeskills affects the decision-making skills of third grade students, an experiment was conducted. It was hypothesized that students who received the lifeskill instruction would score significantly higher on decision-making abilities than those who did not receive the lifeskill instruction. The following chapter is a review of literature related to this topic. Subtopics mentioned in this section include Societal Influences, “Experimental Research,” “Support For Character Education,” and “Suggested Literature For Moral Education.”

Influences In Society

There are many controversial influences in today’s society. Perhaps, one of the most contestable influences is the media. There has been great debate over whether or not television shows and video games teach children to be violent and desensitize them to aggressive scenes (Levin and Nolan, 1996). Most psychological research has demonstrated that viewing violence on television has three major effects on children. They become less sensitive to the pain and hardships of other individuals. They are more afraid of their surrounding world. Thirdly, children may behave more aggressively toward other people (American Psychological Association, 1985).

The American Psychological Association stated in February 1985 that viewing television violence can be very hazardous to children. The Association also suggested ways in which parents could intervene in order to protect their children from the harmful effects of the media. This advisory indicates that children are constantly being exposed to harmful programs, and actions must be taken to counterbalance the damage that may result from the media (American Psychological Association, 1985). It seems as though it would be beneficial for the schools to also take the initiative to incorporate value-instilling programs into the curriculum so that students will learn acceptable behavior through educators as well as by working with peers (Naughton and Thomas, p.28, March 2000).

Another societal influence that has a profound effect on an individual's beliefs and actions is religion. Many people base their lives around their religious values. According to the Roman Catholic Church, children have the ability to reason by the age of seven. This is marked by their first confession and holy communion. This, however, is strongly debated by developmental psychologists. These researchers say that the age at which a child is fully able to comprehend that lying, stealing, cheating, and harming are morally wrong is questionable. Almost all researchers and authorities, however, do seem to agree that acceptable values and moral behavior should be instilled in people in their early childhood years. Teaching children to learn right from wrong early in life will help to ingrain proper values inside of them while they are young and most impressionable (Begley & Kalb, 2000).

Experimental Research

Many studies have been conducted to test the effects of moralistic instruction on children. In a study published by Connie Jones and Diane Gower, third and fourth graders were given special instruction using children's literature to see if it would affect their views of value laden actions. The experimenters separated the students into two intact groups and collected data by administering a pre and posttest opinionaire, which included a likert scale. The children received ten weeks of instruction, which consisted of reading literature, discussion, journal writing, and group activities. Through these activities, the researchers were able to assess student views. A t-test was performed for dependent groups (Jones & Gower, 1994).

The results of the study were very positive. Statistical analysis revealed that students subjected to a ten-week course of organized moral instruction improved their scores on a number of ethical behavior measurements. The students showed better methods of conflict resolution, increased honesty, and better interpersonal behavior (Jones & Gower, 1994).

Another study regarding the same subject was performed by Darcia Narvaez, Jennifer Bentley, Tracy Gleason, and Jay Samuels in 1998. Their study was performed to see if individuals at different age levels could understand the morals of specific narratives. Sixty-one third grade students, thirty-eight fifth grade students, and twenty-eight adults were instructed to listen to and then read along with three moral stories, which were chosen from The Book of Virtues and other readings. The participants then were asked to write the lesson, choose the moral from a list of selections, and pick out a story with the same lesson from three choices. As a control method, subjects listened to and read a story without a moral and responded to questions related to the story itself.

Also, a control group consisting of twenty-eight college students performed the tasks (Narvaez, et al. 1998).

The results of the study demonstrated that a developmental difference in moral comprehension was evident and was displayed by the reading comprehension scores themselves. Although third grade students were capable of learning moral lessons from literature, they were not as successful as fifth grade students or adults. Nonetheless, third grade children were capable of enhancing their character through literature, proving this type of study can be accomplished with students in this age group (Narvaez, et. al. 1998).

In an article entitled, "Establishing an Affective School Environment To Enhance Character Development in Pre K-3rd Grade Students Using Storytelling Techniques," Karol Yeats writes about an elementary school teacher who also conducted a study to see the effect of moralistic instruction on the character development of children. The purpose of the experiment was to socialize pre-kindergarten to third grade students to be cooperative, responsible, people. The instructor's intentions were to create a safe, positive environment, improve character development, lessen behavioral problems, and improve the home and school life of the children (Yeats, 1990).

The study was carried out over a period of eight months, during which time the subjects participated in various story writing and story telling activities. The investigation seemed to be very effective, resulting in over 600 works by the children. There was a definite improvement in character development and a decrease in behavioral problems (Yeats, 1990).

Support For Character Education

In Classroom Management, the authors write that children 7 1/2 years old are in Piaget's concrete operational stage of cognitive development. In this stage, they display actions which are based on reciprocal favors and are generally directed to fulfill their personal needs first. These children are, however, beginning to understand motives. This is, therefore, a good cognitive stage to attempt to instill ethical personality traits (Levin and Nolan, 1996).

According to Bernadyn Kim Suh and Jerome Traiger (1999), specific values, such as honesty, respect, care, and responsibility should be taught to young children as soon as they enter school. In their article, "Teaching Values Through Elementary Social Studies And Literature Curricula," they state that stories "provide a common reference point and good examples for children to learn." These authors site William Kilpatrick in his book, Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong: Moral Illiteracy and the Case for Character Education.

Kilpatrick shows that it is important for stories to carry messages of society's values. "This is because stories are one of the chief ways by which visions are conveyed (a vision, in turn, may be defined as a story about the way things are or the way the world works). Just as vision and morality are intimately connected so are story and morality" (p.28, American Educator). A "values-rich curriculum" is essential because it encourages individuals to make positive decisions about their education, themselves, and their relationships with others (Suh and Traiger, 1999). As a result of the recent homicide of a six-year-old girl by one of her classmates, many more people have begun to promote the notion of incorporating character education into American homes and school systems. In an article which appeared in "Newsweek" shortly after the incident, the authors give

several suggestions for ways in which Americans can prevent these violent occurrences from happening. They say,

The media and entertainment industries can help change a culture that too often glorifies violence. Schools and community groups can reach troubled youth before their troubles simmer over. And most fundamentally, parents can talk to their children, teach them to resolve their conflicts peacefully, raise them with the right values (Naughton and Thomas, p. 28, March 2000).

These authors support the idea that young children must be taught values early in life so that they will know how to behave in the future (Naughton and Thomas, p.28, March 2000).

Additional support for character education can be seen in the writings of Donald Biskin and Kenneth Hoskisson. They say,

It is impossible for the schools to stay out of values. Children's values develop during the school years. Values are inevitably influenced by the school structure, the adults who work in it, the relations of all involved, and the choice of subject matter and materials (Biskin and Hoskisson, 1974).

Biskin and Hoskisson state that the child is the only one who can make important decisions regarding the way he or she behaves. As a result, they believe that it is the schools' responsibility to take action to influence the children to make virtuous decisions (Biskin & Hoskisson, 1974).

In Curriculum Issues and Trends, Allan Ornstein and Francis Hunkins state,

We have gone beyond the question of how to get children to do what we want to asking what must be provided in the curricular experiences of children and youth that will enable them to engage in right action, to develop these competencies and dispositions to act that will advance not only the quality of their lives but also the well-being of the community (P. 370).

It is important for curriculum developers to recognize the need to teach values and ethical behavior to the youth of today so that many of the negative cultural influences can be counterbalanced by positive ones (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998).

Ornstein and Hunkins make several good points, including the difference between teaching good behavior and teaching good character. These authors discuss the fact that many educators simply instruct children to follow rules that lead to appropriate behavior. However, there is little thought involved regarding the relevance of these rules. For this reason, it is essential to explain the reasons behind the desired actions and the results of harmful behaviors. By teaching students the meaning behind the activities, the children can gain a more internal motivation for behaving in the proper manner (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998).

W. Huitt gives three main reasons for character education. These three reasons are: Every child should be entitled to choose to develop his or her personality according to long-accepted values. It's the responsibility of parents, teachers, and other adults to teach proper values and behaviors to the children in our society, and it's the right thing to do in light of the dynamic cultural shifts in the modern world (Huitt, 1999).

Charles Haynes is yet another individual who views character education as an essential component of the curriculum in public schools. In "Character Education in the Public Schools," he describes the increasing awareness by both religious and political organizations of the need for moralistic instruction in the schools of America. Haynes states,

While the family and faith communities are primarily responsible for shaping moral character, the schools have the vital task of teaching and inspiring civic virtue...By teaching civic virtue and democratic culture, schools become training

grounds for participation in the public square of America. Students not only learn about the public policy issues that confront our society, but also how to debate those issues with civility and respect.

It is important for students to learn how to handle different issues in a respectful and diplomatic way so that they will become effective problem solvers. Educators can arm students with a strong foundation on which to base their beliefs and help them to behave in a decent manner (Haynes, 1993).

Haynes sites Thomas Lickona (Bantam, 1991), who gives ten reasons for character education. Lickona says character education in the schools is necessary because: Young people constantly harm themselves and others due to ignorance of or unconcern for moral behavior. Passing on values to each subsequent generation has always been an important role of a civilization, and many children are not taught morals anywhere else. Moral values provide a common ground for people despite controversies regarding when to apply some of these values. Democracies rely on character education because they are governments of and by the people. Value-free instruction is nonexistent (Schools teach values daily even if they do not realize it). Ethical questions are some of the most important questions people will need to answer in today's world. Character education in the schools is increasingly supported by various people and organizations. Strong character instruction is necessary if we are to maintain good educators. Effective moralistic education enhances student behavior, makes schools more refined communities, and results in better academic performance (Haynes, 1993).

Suggested Literature For Moral Education

What kinds of literature should be incorporated into the curriculum in order to instill moral values in the learners? Many people from various groups and organizations

have voiced their opinions on this subject. For example, in “Moral Theme Comprehension,” the authors state that the literature used to teach morals must be chosen carefully. Jetton (1994) studied elementary-aged children and found that they are deeply affected by narrative story elements. Therefore, it would seem to be beneficial to include narrative elements into the plan for teaching character development (Narvaez, et.al., 1998).

According to Bernadyn Kim Suh and Jerome Traiger, a great way to instill moral values in children is to expose them to children’s literature. Suh and Traiger state that, “Stories provide a common reference point and good examples for children to learn” (P. 725). This may be due to the fact that children’s literature contains stories that relate to the lives of students at the elementary level. The desired values are more likely to remain with the students as they develop over the years if the children can relate to the stories in which they first learned about them (Suh & Traiger, 1999).

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Introduction

In order to test the effectiveness of lifeskill instruction on elementary-aged children, an experiment was performed. The researcher pretested two classes of third grade students, one served as the experimental group (Group A) while the other acted as a control group (Group B) for the study. Unlike Group B, Group A later received lifeskill instruction. Both groups were posttested after the experimental period had ended.

During the study, the researcher encountered a few problems. For example, not all the students agreed to participate in the study and several students were absent during the test administration. These obstacles may have altered the results of the test. The results demonstrated that several children improved their scores after the instructional period while several children actually did poorer after instruction. At least half of the students in the control group scored the same as they did on the pretest.

Description of the Sample

The sample included two third grade classes in an upper-middle-class school in southern New Jersey. The participants were between the ages of seven and ten years old. The experimental group consisted of twenty students (thirteen boys and seven girls). The control group consisted of nineteen students (eleven boys and eight girls). The reading levels for both classes ranged from primer to well above grade level.

Design of the Study

There were two groups of approximately twenty students each. Both groups consisted of students from the same elementary school. Students in both groups were pretested in March with an opinionnaire containing fifteen multiple-choice questions. Group A later received treatment, which involved the provision of “lifeskills instructional literature” in the curriculum. The other group was not treated and served as a control group for the study. Both classes of students took a posttest in April to determine reliability and validity.

Procedure

About forty third grade students were selected. One class acted as the experimental group (Group A). The other class served as a control group (Group B). Each class had a different teacher. Before beginning the experiment, a letter which explained the procedure of the study was given to the parents of the participants in both the control group and the experimental group (see appendix A). A permission slip which was to be signed and returned was also distributed to the parents of the subjects (See appendix B).

The students in both classes were given a pretest of questions based on their personal values. The test contained twelve questions (See appendix C). The participants were to select one of the possible choices. Based on their answer, students received between 0 to 12 points. After all of the students had completed this test, their scores were recorded for later use.

During a period of two weeks following the pretest, students in the experimental group listened to several stories in which specific life skills (integrity, flexibility, initiative, and responsibility) were taught. The literature included stories from four different books. The books were Billy Goat Gruff And The Baby Troll by Roger Hall, Seven At A Blow by Dorothy Rickards, The Golden Goose by Brenda Parkes, and The Boy Who Cried Wolf by Lucy Lawrence and Chantal Stewart (see appendix D).

The control group did not hear the stories that dealt with the specific lifeskills. Following the treatment period, the experimental and control groups were again tested. The posttest included the same questions as the pretest. The posttest contained the same number of questions as the pretest and they appeared in the same order on both tests. The same teacher administered the test to both sets of students.

Description of Instrument or Test Being Used

The effect of lifeskill instructional literature on character development was determined by comparing the opinions of students as measured by a twelve item opinionnaire. This was to determine baseline moral attitudes. Data was collected and subjected to statistical analysis using a t-test for dependent groups to determine validity. The test was two-tailed and had a significance level of $\alpha=.05$.

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

A study was conducted to test the effect of lifeskill education on elementary aged children. Two classes of third grade students (Group A and Group B) were pretested. Unlike Group B, Group A later received lifeskill instruction. Both groups were posttested. The following chapter discusses the findings of the study. Tables and figures are provided to demonstrate whether the subjects' scores improved, went down, or remained the same.

Statistics

Group A consisted of a sample of 20 students. Following the treatment period, 13 of the 20 students' scores either improved or remained the same. Group B contained 12 students. After the posttest was administered, half of the participants' scores stayed the same while two showed improvement in their decision-making abilities. The following table shows the participants' scores on the pretest and the posttest. The minus (-) sign indicates that the scores went down. The plus (+) sign indicates that the scores improved. An equal (=) sign indicates that the scores remained the same. The table is set up so that the students' identification numbers are located on the left column for each group. The scores on the pretest and posttest are then represented in the next two columns for each

group of third grade students. The final column for each group contains the symbol (+, -, or =), which represents each student's progress from the pretest to the posttest. The scores are represented as the number correct out of twelve, since each test contained twelve items. (see table 1)

table 1

Student Performance on Pre-and Posttests

GROUP A (Sample=20)

GROUP B (Sample=12)

	Pretest	Posttest		Pretest	Posttest
#14	11/12	9/12 -	#15	09/12	09/12 =
#16	10/12	11/12 +	#14	10/12	10/12 =
#05	7/12	9/12 +	#19	08/12	07/12 -
#04	9/12	9/12 =	#10	11/12	11/12 =
#18	9/12	8/12 -	#02	09/12	08/12 -
#12	8/12	7/12 -	#18	10/12	10/12 =
#13	10/12	8/12 -	#04	10/12	11/12 +
#07	9/12	10/12 +	#20	10/12	10/12 =
#08	9/12	11/12 +	#07	11/12	09/12 -
#19	9/12	10/12 +	#16	11/12	09/12 -
#03	10/12	10/12 =	#12	09/12	08/12 -
#15	07/12	05/12 -	#13	07/12	10/12 +
#06	10/12	11/12 +			
#17	08/12	08/12 =			KEY
#01	09/12	10/12 +			+ score improved
#20	08/12	11/12 +			- lower score

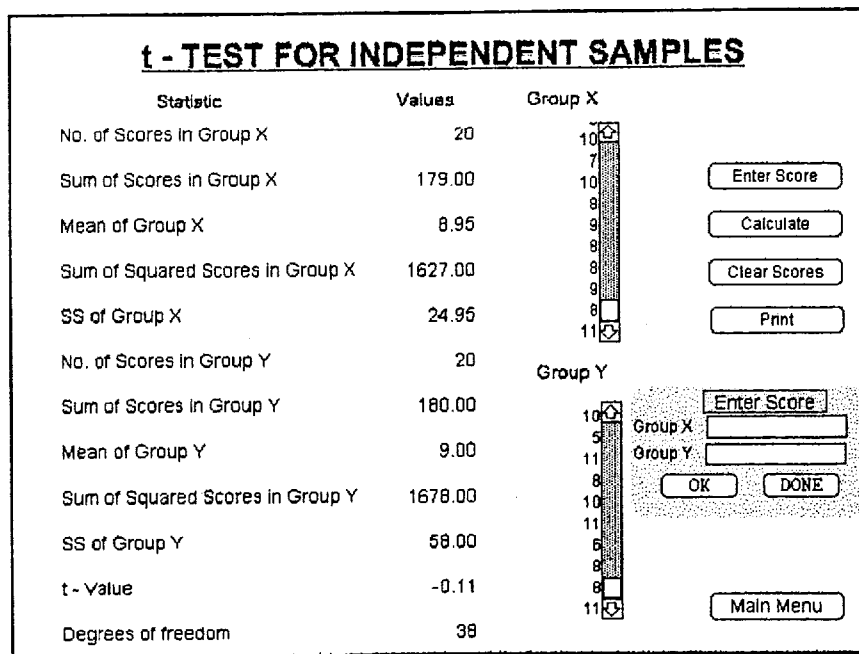
table 1 continued

#10	08/12	06/12 -	= score remained the same
#11	09/12	08/12 -	
#02	08/12	08/12 =	
#09	11/12	11/12 =	

Analysis of the Pretest And Posttest Results

After the results were obtained, two t-tests for independent samples were performed to determine whether the difference between the scores was significant. The first was done for Group A and a second test was carried out for Group B. (See figure 1).

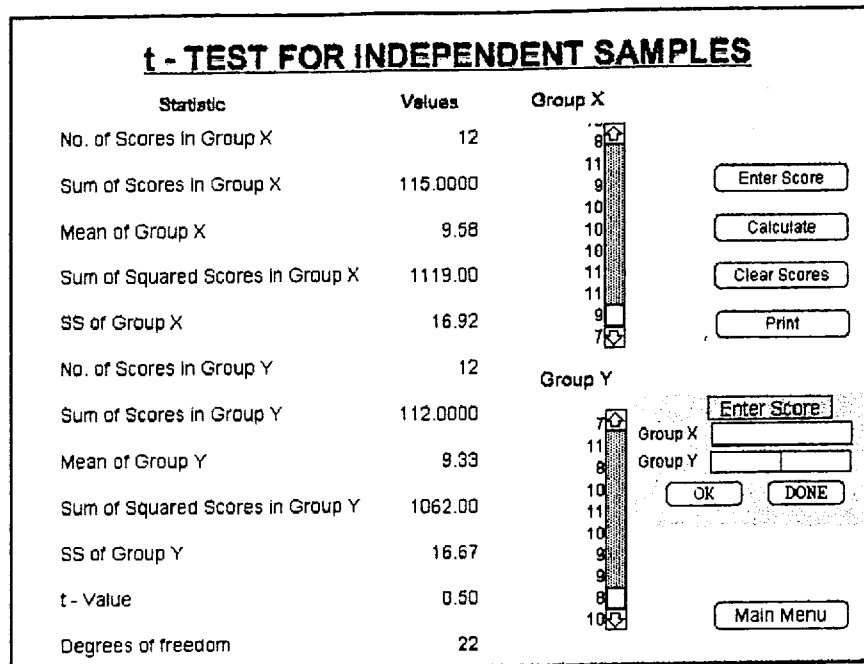
figure 1



Findings

The t-tests demonstrated that there was a significant difference in the results of the study for Group A. There was not a significant difference, however, in the results of the study for Group B. In Group A, eight of the twenty students' scores improved and five remained the same. In Group B, six of the twelve students performed the same on the posttest as they did on the pretest while only two students' scores improved. (see figure 2).

figure 2



CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Does educating students about lifeskills and values have a significant effect on the decision-making abilities of elementary aged students? An experiment was performed to test this question.

Summary of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine whether lifeskill instruction had a significant effect on third grade students' ability to make moral decisions. Did the exposure of value-instilling literature to elementary-aged students help develop their character?

Summary of the Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study was that third grade students who were taught lifeskills would score significantly higher on decision-making abilities than third grade students who were not exposed to value-instilling literature and education.

Summary of the Findings

This research demonstrated that third grade students who were exposed to value-instilling literature performed better on an opinionnaire in which they were asked to make

decisions in particular situations. Although the scores varied, with some students in the experimental group even performing lower on the posttest than on the pretest, most of the subjects in Group A scored the same or higher on the second test. Most of the students in Group B scored the same or lower on the posttest.

Conclusions

The education of lifeskills to elementary aged students does have a significant effect on children at the third grade level. It causes them to react differently in certain situations than they would if they had not had value-instilling instruction. It is difficult, however, to say whether the results may have been altered slightly if some of the limitations were eliminated.

Implications and Recommendations

If children are exposed to literature that teaches them about morals and values, it is very likely that they will improve their abilities to make thoughtful and intelligent decisions. This is important in today's world because, as demonstrated by a review of current literature, there are so many negative influences on children. Exposure to lifeskill instruction seems to have a positive effect on the cognitive abilities of children. This study has demonstrated that value-instilling literature would be an important asset to the elementary curriculum.

APPENDIX A
LETTERS TO PARENTS EXPLAINING THE STUDY

Dear Parents and Guardians of the children in Mrs. Wilson's class,

I am student teaching this semester in Mrs. Jorgensen's third grade at Central Elementary School. I am working on a Master's Degree in Elementary Education and plan to write my thesis on "The Effect of Lifeskill Instructional Literature on Elementary-Age Students." This means that I am attempting to discover whether teaching students about lifeskills will help children make more caring and responsible decisions.

In my third grade class, I am planning a study which will incorporate literature that teaches children about lifeskills. I will be focusing on the areas of integrity, responsibility, flexibility, and initiative. At the end of the unit, I will give all of the third graders the same test to see if they answer the questions differently.

With your permission, I would like your child to participate in my study. The children's participation involves taking a survey at the beginning and at the end of the study. The results will be confidential in that each student will be assigned a number and identified by that number throughout the study. This study has been reviewed and approved by Mrs. Freed. Please sign and return the permission slip by 03/15/00 indicating whether or not you want your child to be a part of the study. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Erika Samantha Pello

Dear Parents and Guardians of the children in Mrs. Jorgensen's class,

I am student teaching this semester with Mrs. Jorgensen at Central School. I am working on a Master's Degree in Elementary Education. As a part of my requirements, I will be writing my thesis on "The Effect of Lifeskill Instructional Literature on Elementary-Age Students." This means that I am attempting to discover whether teaching students about lifeskills will help children make more caring and responsible decisions.

I am planning to pretest the children in both third grade classes. Then, I will incorporate stories that teach children about lifeskills into the Language Arts unit in 3-J. I will be focusing on the areas of integrity, responsibility, flexibility, and initiative. At the end of the unit, I will give all the students the same test to see if they answer the questions differently.

With your permission, I would like your child to be a participant in my study. The results of the study will be confidential in that each student will be assigned a number and identified by that number throughout the study. This study has been reviewed and approved by Mrs. Freed. Please sign and return the permission slip by 03/15/00 indicating whether or not you want your child to be a part of the study. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Erika Samantha Pello

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION SLIPS FOR SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

I do/ do not give _____ permission to participate in this study.

Signature _____

APPENDIX C

PRETEST/POSTTEST ADMINISTERED TO THE STUDENTS

Number _____

Date _____

Read each of the twelve questions to yourself. For each question, circle the letter next to the answer that best describes what you would do in each situation.

1. You get to school early one morning and a man tells you he lost his dog in the woods behind the school. You:

- A. Tell him you do not have time to help.
- B. Help him look.
- C. Tell him you will tell the principal or your teacher that he needs help finding his dog.

2. You are using the computer in your classroom and it stops working. You:

- A. Try to fix it.
- B. Ask your friend, who is great with computers, to fix it.
- C. Ask the teacher for help.

3. You walk into your classroom before school starts and you see your friend take candy from someone else's jacket, which is hanging in the closet at the back of the room. You:

- A. Ask your friend if the other student gave her permission to take the candy. If not, ask her to put the candy back in the jacket pocket.
- B. Tell the teacher that you saw your friend take candy out of another student's jacket pocket.
- C. Put one of your own pieces of candy in the jacket pocket.

4. The teacher sees you talking during class and asks why you were talking. You:

- A. Say your friend was talking to you first.
- B. Apologize to your teacher for interrupting the class and admit you were talking.
- C. Continue to talk to your friend.

5. During an important test, you see another student looking at a piece of paper with the answers on it. You:
 - A. Tell the teacher.
 - B. Do not say anything because you do not want to get your friend in trouble.
 - C. Tell the student to stop cheating.

6. Your class is taking a math test. You finish the test early. You:
 - A. Chat with the other students around you if they are also finished.
 - B. Take out a book and read until everyone is finished.
 - C. Go up to the teacher and ask what you should do next.

7. You must have all of your books covered. One day, when you go to take your math book out of your desk, the cover rips. You:
 - A. Put the book and the ripped cover back in your desk.
 - B. Take the book home and get it recovered.
 - C. Ask your teacher what you should do.

8. You are walking to school with a friend and you have to hurry because you are almost late. Your friend's backpack falls and all of the papers fall out, including important homework. The papers are being blown away by the wind. If you stay to help pick up the papers, you will be late. You:
 - A. Stay and help your friend pick up the papers.
 - B. Go to school and tell the teacher why your friend is late.
 - C. Keep walking and tell your friend you are sorry you cannot help.

9. Your teacher for Art kept you a few minutes late. The teacher says “Run back to your classroom.” You:

- A. Do what the teacher said and run back to your classroom.
- B. Walk anyway because there is a rule against running in the halls.
- C. Stay in the classroom because you do not know what to do.

10. You are doing an art project and you have to make a finished picture by the end of the class. The assignment is to draw a picture and then fill it in with colored circles. You start by making many tiny circles, but you soon realize you will not be able to finish in time if you keep making little circles, even though you think they make the picture look prettier. You should:

- A. Do as much as you can and turn in the incomplete picture with small circles.
- B. Stop working because you know you will not be able to finish.
- C. Finish the picture with large circles because then you will finish on time.

11. You are working on a project at school and the teacher says you need to draw a straight line. You forgot to bring your ruler to school, but you think you could draw a straight line by using a book as a straight edge. You:

- A. Use the book as your straight edge.
- B. Try to draw the line without using a ruler or a book.
- C. Interrupt the teacher to ask for a ruler.

12. Your teacher tells you to work with a group of four students in order to work on your science project. You think you have an idea that will definitely help your group, but the other students in your group think their ideas are also very good. The other kids agree on one of the other ideas. You:

- A. Go along with the group and use their idea.
- B. Try to find a way to use everyone's ideas.
- C. Use your own idea because you are sure that you will get a high grade.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE LESSON PLANS FOR LITERATURE INSTRUCTION

GRADE 3

LESSON 1 (LIFESKILL INSTRUCTION)

OBJECTIVE: 1. After listening to the instructor read a play which portrays the lifeskill of initiative, the students will be able to act out a scene from the play with 95% accuracy.

ANTICIPATORY SET:

1. Ask the students to meet on the rug.
2. Begin the discussion by explaining that we will begin a new unit today on fables and fairy tales.
3. Ask, "Who can tell me what a fairy tale is?" (a story about made-up characters, such as wizards, fairies, or dragons.)
4. Ask, "Who can tell me what a fable is?" (a story that teaches a lesson- this lesson is called a moral)
5. Say, "Many of these stories have morals, which have to do with lifeskills. Who can tell me what a lifeskill is?" (A lifeskill is a form of behavior that helps a person to act in a good way)
6. "Who can give me an example of a lifeskill?" (flexibility, initiative, integrity, responsibility)

INPUT:

1. Say, "Today, we are going to read the first story in our new unit.
2. Say, "The title of the book is Seven at a Blow."
3. Say, "It is a play which has 4 scenes, but I will only read scenes 1, 3, and 4."

MODELING: 1. Read Scenes 1, 3, and 4 aloud to the class.

GUIDED PRACTICE:

1. Review each scene with the students.
2. Ask, "Where does the play take place?" (a clearing near a little town)
3. Ask, "What happens in the first scene?" (Children are playing around an apple tree and telling stories of imaginary scary adventures. Thomas Tailor enters and tells the kids that he is brave because he "killed seven flies at a blow.")
4. After reading the third scene, ask, "What happens in the third scene?" (Thomas Tailor manages to apprehend two robbers by himself.)
5. After reading the fourth scene, ask, "What happens in the fourth scene?" (One of the characters, Belinda, is captured by a dragon. Thomas saves her by throwing bread and honey at the dragon so it will eat that instead of Belinda.)
6. Tell the students that they will act out scenes 3 and 4 for the class.
7. Divide the class into four groups. Two groups will act out the third scene and the other two groups will act out the fourth scene.
8. Give each group a book to look at while the students rehearse their parts.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING:

1. Have the students come up with a way to act out the scene which they were assigned.
2. Have the students present their skits to the rest of the class.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE: 1. Tell the class to think about what the moral of the story might be and which lifeskills, if any, the story teaches.

GRADE 3

LESSON 2 (LIFESKILL INSTRUCTION)

OBJECTIVE: 1. After acting out a scene from Seven at a Blow, students will be able to state the moral of the story with 100% accuracy.

ANTICIPATORY SET: 1. Review the play the students heard the teacher read yesterday.
2. Have the students finish presenting their skits to the class.
3. Tell the students to meet on the rug with their think pads.

INPUT: 1. Ask the students if they know what the moral of the story is and which lifeskill the play taught.
2. Have the students write the moral of the story in their think pads.
3. Tell the students to think about scene 4 in the play.
4. Say, "The tailor realized that someone had to stop the dragon from hurting other people. He wanted to be the one to do it so he did it, but most importantly, he figured out a way to do it safely. If he just went to fight the dragon by himself, he knew he would lose so he came up with a safe plan."
5. Explain that this is an example of someone taking initiative in a difficult situation.
6. Say, "Initiative means to do something because it needs to be done."
7. Explain that the moral of this story is that in tough situations, a person should try to come up with solutions to solve the problem, but to act in a safe manner.
8. Ask the students how they could relate this idea to their own lives.
9. Have the students give examples of how this story relates to their lives. Add to their examples.
10. Tell the kids to write in their think pads the answer to this question: "If you were going to make a movie based on this fable, which actors or actresses would you choose for each part? Explain why."

MODELING: 1. Give the students examples of actors or actresses I would choose.
2. For example, say, Christopher Reeves, because he played Superman and always found a way to rescue people safely.

GUIDED PRACTICE: 1. Check the students think pads as they are writing and give them suggestions of how they could add to their explanations for the actors and actresses they chose.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING: 1. Have the students read their paragraphs to the class.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE: 1. Tell the students to read the second scene on their own.

GRADE 3

LESSON 3 (LIFESKILL INSTRUCTION)

OBJECTIVE: 1. After listening to the instructor read a story which portrays the lifeskill of responsibility, the students will be able to draw a picture of the story with 95% accuracy.

ANTICIPATORY SET: 1. Ask the students to meet on the rug.
2. Review the previous lessons by asking, "Who can give us a short summary of the play, Seven at a Blow?"
3. Ask, "What was the moral of Seven at a Blow and what lifeskill did it teach us?"

INPUT: 1. Say, "Today, we are going to read a fable called The Boy Who Cried Wolf."
2. Ask, "Who remembers what a fable is?" (a story that teaches a lesson)
3. Say, "While I read this story, think about what the moral might be and what lifeskill we could learn to use by listening to this story."

MODELING: 1. Read the story aloud to the class.

GUIDED PRACTICE: 1. Ask the students if they think the boy's behavior was good.
2. Ask the students why the boy pretended that the wolf was taking his sheep.
3. Tell the children to go back to their seats and make an illustration of the fable.
4. Monitor their progress as they draw their pictures.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING: 1. Have the students meet on the rug again.
2. Allow the students to present their pictures to the class.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE: 1. Tell the class to continue thinking about what the moral of the story is and which lifeskills, if any, the story teaches. Tell them to write their thoughts down in their think pads.

GRADE 3

LESSON 4 (LIFESKILL INSTRUCTION)

OBJECTIVE: 1. By working in groups of two or three people, students will be able to write at least one other moral for the story with 100% accuracy.

ANTICIPATORY SET: 1. Ask the students to meet on the rug.
2. Review the previous lessons by asking someone to tell the class what The Boy Who Cried Wolf is about.
3. Now, ask the students what the moral of the story is and which lifeskill it teaches the reader to use.

INPUT: 1. Explain that the lifeskill demonstrated by this story is responsibility. The definition of responsibility is to be accountable for your actions.
2. Explain that the moral of this story is to take the blame for our mistakes and to be responsible for our actions.
3. Ask the students how they could relate this idea to their own lives.
4. Have the students give examples of how the story relates to their lives. Add to their examples.
5. Tell the students that now they will work with a partner at their seats. Explain that they will write the moral of the story we discussed in class in their own words, and then they will try to come up with at least one other moral for this story together. (For example, never lie because you never know if you might really need help. If you keep pretending, people may not help you when you really need help.)
6. Assign partners and pass out paper.

MODELING: 1. Reread the moral of the story on page 22 to the class so they can hear it one more time before they write their own morals.

GUIDED PRACTICE: 1. Let the children write the morals to the story.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING: 1. Have the students meet on the rug again.
2. Allow the students to present their work to the rest of the class.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE: 1. Tell the students to think about ways they can be responsible at home and at school.

GRADE 3

LESSON 5 (LIFESKILL INSTRUCTION)

OBJECTIVE: 1. By working in groups of five people, the students will write their own stories which have the same moral as The Golden Goose with 95% accuracy.

ANTICIPATORY SET: 1. Ask the students to meet on the rug.
2. Review the story of The Boy Who Cried Wolf.
3. Ask the kids to discuss the moral of the story with the class and to tell which lifeskill was taught. (responsibility)

INPUT: 1. Say, "Today, we are going to read a story called The Golden Goose."
2. Remind the students to think about the moral and lifeskills portrayed in the story.

MODELING: 1. Read the story aloud to the class.

GUIDED PRACTICE: 1. Discuss the story with the class. Talk about the lifeskill of integrity.
Ask the students what integrity means. (To act according to a sense of what's right)
2. Ask, "Do you think that any of the characters in this story displayed integrity?" (Peter)
3. Ask, "How did Peter show integrity?" (He tried to help others, even if it meant sacrificing things for himself first.)
4. Ask, "Now, who can tell me what the moral of the story is?" (You should do what you know is right. If you do the right thing, you will often be rewarded for your actions.)
5. Explain to the students that they will now return to their seats and work with their groups to make up a story of their own which has the same moral as the one we just read about.
6. Put the students into groups.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING: 1. Give the students time to write their own stories based on the story discussed in class.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE: 1. Tell the students to practice telling their story at home so they can tell it to the class the next day.

GRADE 3

LESSON 6 (LIFESKILL INSTRUCTION)

OBJECTIVE: 1. By working in groups of five people, students will be able to tell a moralistic story that they created to the class with 90% accuracy.

ANTICIPATORY SET: 1. Review the story from the previous day.
2. Discuss the moral and the lifeskill of integrity.

INPUT: 1. Tell the students that integrity is a very important lifeskill because it helps us to be kind people and make good decisions regarding others.
2. Ask the students how they can relate the lifeskill of integrity to their own lives.

MODELING: 1. Give the students an example of how they can relate this lifeskill to their own lives.
2. Ask, "If you found a five-dollar bill on the floor, would you pick it up, turn it into the office, or leave it there?" (turn it into the office because it's the right thing to do)

GUIDED PRACTICE: 1. Tell the groups to finish writing their stories from yesterday so that they can tell them to the class today.
2. Give the students time to work on their stories.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING: 1. Have the students tell their stories to the class.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE: 1. Tell the students to think of ways to use the lifeskill of integrity in their own lives.

GRADE 3

LESSON 7 (LIFESKILL INSTRUCTION)

OBJECTIVE: 1. By working with a group of five people, the students will be able to write a song based on the book, Billy Goat Gruff and the Baby Troll, which portrays the lifeskill, flexibility, with 90% accuracy.

ANTICIPATORY SET: 1. Ask the students to meet on the rug.
2. Ask the students what integrity means. (to act according to a sense of what's right)
3. Ask the students to give an example of integrity.

INPUT: 1. Say, "Today, we will read our last fable."
2. Say, "The name of the story is Billy Goat Gruff and the Baby Troll."
3. Say, "In this story, I want you to look for one more lifeskill that we haven't discussed yet."
4. Say, "Also, see if you can figure out what the moral of the story is."

MODELING: 1. Read the story aloud for the class.

GUIDED PRACTICE: 1. Discuss the lifeskill of flexibility and what it means (to be willing to change plans when necessary.)
2. Ask the students to describe the way in which this book gives an example of flexibility. (the trolls and the goats compromise at the end so that everyone is happy). Explain that the moral of the story is to be flexible and to work together in order to come up with solutions to problems.
3. Tell the students to go back to their seats and work with their groups to write a song or a poem about the story we just read.
2. Give the students time to work on their songs and poems.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING: 1. Monitor the students' progress as they write their songs and poems.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE: 1. Tell the students to practice their songs or poems so they could present them to the class the next day.

GRADE 3

LESSON 8 (LIFESKILL INSTRUCTION)

OBJECTIVE: 1. By working in groups of five, students will be able to present a song or poem about a moralistic story to the class with 90% accuracy.

ANTICIPATORY SET: 1. Review the lifeskill of flexibility.
2. Ask the students how this lifeskill might relate to their lives.

INPUT: 1. Explain that it is important to be flexible in times of difficulty. Say, "Things do not always go the way we want them to so we should always be ready to change our plans."

MODELING: 1. Give students an example.
2. Say, "Suppose you were told to work with a partner to do a science experiment in school. The next day, your partner is absent because he is sick. How could you be flexible the day that your partner is absent?" (Be willing to work with another partner or group)

GUIDED PRACTICE: 1. Let the students finish working on their songs and poems from the previous day.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING: 1. Have the students sing or recite their songs and poems to the class.
2. Review the lifeskills discussed with the class.
3. Say, "The most important thing to know about lifeskills is that they involve judgment. There is rarely just one right answer when making decisions. The purpose of lifeskills is to use your brain to act according to what most people believe is the right thing to do."

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE: 1. Say, "Review the lifeskills we have discussed and try to use them in your own life as often as you can."

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