The influence of a social skills program on children's social behaviour, affective

perspective-taking, and empathy skills

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Abstract

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Social skills are vital to children's healthy development as they provide them with tools

to deal with their everyday life issues. The purpose of this study was to assess the

influence of teaching the value of social skills to young children as a way to enhance their

prosocial behaviour and increase their affective perspective-taking abilities and empathy

skills. Particularly, through this intervention the children were encouraged to understand

the value of learning prosocial behaviour. An eight week workshop was implemented in

an afterschool program offering children an opportunity to understand the importance of

adopting prosocial behaviour in their day to day relationships. Educator reports showed

an improvement in children's engagement in positive behaviour and social interaction in

the classroom setting after their participation in the workshop. Observations of the

children's behaviour during the workshop sessions did not show any significant

differences. In addition, children's perceptions of affective perspective-taking, empathy

and social skills seemed to change at the end of the intervention. Implications for

working with children and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Keywords: social skills; ethical values; prosocial behaviour; affective perspective-taking; empathy; emotion knowledge

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Finally, I would like to thank all the children and their parents who participated in the workshop and for their enthusiasm and energy during the workshop sessions.

DEDICATION

To my loving husband, thank you for your patience and support.

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Introduction

Statement of the problem

In our modern society, how many people do we see helping an elderly woman cross a busy street, helping a homeless man who has fallen on the ground, or returning a lost purse? Are we teaching children these implicit values of life? Are we modeling these behaviours so that children may learn through us? It is evident that many children may experience negative conditions in their daily lives that may be related to family stress, conflict, violence, separation and divorce (e.g., Amato, 2000; Yehuda, Spertus, & Golier, 2001). In addition, they may experience difficulties with troublesome peers (e.g., Brown, 2004), or they may be exposed to violence on television (e.g., Peters & Blumberg, 2002). Finally, they may be living in low socioeconomic conditions and exposed to high-risk crime in their neighbourhoods (e.g., Evans, 2004). As a result, the development of behavioural and emotional problems in children is of great concern and thus, has been the subject of much research attention (e.g., Hemphill & Littlefield, 2006). According to Hemphill and Littlefield (2006), interventions set to prevent or to ameliorate these behavioural or emotional problems in children have included child-focused psychotherapy, such as social skills training and interventions aimed at both children and their families.

Purpose of the study

In light of this, the purpose of the current study was to encourage prosocial behaviour in children from an early age so that the development of behavioural or emotional difficulties in their future lives would be prevented. Children were taught values such as trust, kindness, caring, generosity, patience, as part of a social skills

program. Understanding these values may lead to increased perspective-taking and empathy skills and prosocial behaviour in children.

Rationale for the study

The current study is important to the field of education, as it adds the element of teaching the ethical values of social skills to children. In this way children not only learn what they have to do to act prosocially, but understand the reason and importance of their prosocial behaviour from an early stage in life.

Research questions

The following questions guided the inquiry:

1. Did the children's participation in the social skills workshop have an influence on their prosocial behaviour (positive behaviour and social interaction)?

2. Did the children's participation in the social skills workshop influence their perceptions of affective perspective-taking and empathy?

3. How did the children who participated in the social skills workshop understand social skills? Did their views of social skills change as a result of the intervention?

Literature Review

Prosocial behaviours

Prosocial behaviours are defined as behaviours aimed at helping and assisting others, having compassion, understanding and behaving justly towards others (Garner, 2006; Kidron & Fleischman, 2006) and having a sense of duty and obligation towards others rather than just seeking pleasure for personal desires (Mussen & Eisenberg, 2001). Prosocial behaviours are directed towards both familiar and unfamiliar peers and/or classmates (Benenson, Pascoe, & Radmore, 2007).

Nelson and Crick (1999) have found that children who are prosocial tend to see their world from a prosocial perspective, where there is a larger possibility to control their actions and feelings (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000). In this way, they are more prone to developing and maintaining peer relations, as they are able to distinguish between positive and negative circumstances and how to deal with them effectively (Webster- Stratton & Lindsey, 1999).

Empathy and affective perspective-taking

Empathy in children has been related to exhibition of prosocial behaviour (e.g., Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Roberts & Strayer, 1996; Strayer & Roberts, 2004), and increased use of social skills (e.g., Denham, et al., 2002a; Hoffman, 2000). Empathy is defined as "an innate, hardwired response connecting us as social beings to the emotional plights of others" (Zahn-Waxler & Radke Yarrow, 1990, p. 111). It is known to be the emotion which joins the affective condition of one person with that of the other by experiencing similar or close to similar feelings as the other person (Eisenberg, 2003;

Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Sadovsky, 2006; Hastings, Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, Usher, & Bridges, 2000; Hoffman, 2000).

According to various studies, empathy also prevents anger (Strayer & Roberts, 2004) and aggression (Hastings, et al., 2000; Strayer & Roberts, 2004) as the person causing harm to another understands and feels the pain of the victim. In addition, past studies of Zahn-Waxler and Radke-Yarrow (1990) reported that empathy motivated altruism in people. Thus, when one was able to understand another's feelings, especially if they were negative ones, then, it was more probable for that person to help the other rather than hurt him/her (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). Importantly, a study conducted by Dadds et al. (2007) showed that lack of empathy was related to behavioural problems and school difficulties. Nevertheless, past studies have argued that in some instances, abused children or children coming from disruptive family backgrounds were not acting empathically when their peers were in negative situations and it resulted to them acting violently and aggressively towards peers instead of comforting them (Feshbach, 1989; Main & George, 1985).

Studying the relationship between empathy and perspective-taking, Malcolm and Greenburg (2000) suggested that perspective-taking is a form of empathy which is defined as "accurately perceiving the internal frame of reference of another" (Gold & Rogers, 1995, p. 79). Furthermore, past research has shown that perspective-taking in 4- to 10-year-old children has been positively correlated with helping their peers, generosity towards their peers (Rubin & Schneider, 1973); and playing cooperatively with their peers (Johnson 1975; Levine & Hoffman 1975).

A large body of research has shown that empathy can occur in the absence of indications of emotions through affective perspective-taking where a person infers how the other is feeling in a certain situation and imagines himself in the other person's position (e.g., Eisenberg, Shea, Carlo, & Knight, 1991; Feshbach, 1978; Smith, 2006). Most studies have found that young children empathize with strangers who are in painful situations (Young, Fox, & Zahn-Waxler, 1999; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner, & Chapman, 1992). However, one study found that children as young as 18 months -of - age, developed distress and concern for a stranger who was in a painful situation but who did not show any signs of pain or distress (Vaish, Carpenter, & Tomasello, 2009).

Therefore, perspective-taking skills seem to develop in children from a very young age and can lead them to correctly infer their own and others' feelings, which may lead to empathy for others (Widen & Russell, 2003). Underwood and Moore (1982) and Eisenberg and Miller (1987), differentiated between perspective-taking and empathy; empathy is described as an emotional reaction to the other; whereas perspective-taking implies an understanding of the other's condition or state. In addition to that, perspective-taking has two levels; affective and cognitive. Affective perspective-taking occurs when an individual recognizes the feelings of others and has an understanding of why those feelings are occurring (Hinnant & O'Brien, 2007; Oswald, 1996; Underwood & Moore, 1982); whereas cognitive perspective-taking occurs when an individual has an understanding of how the other perceives a situation and the process of the other's thoughts (Hinnant & O'Brien, 2007; Underwood & Moore, 1982; Oswald, 1996). Both types of perspective-taking can result in helping others. A study conducted by Oswald, showed that the children who concentrated on the feelings of the other person helped that

person more than children who concentrated on the thoughts of the other person. It was found that individuals who focused on the other's feelings were more empathic and more altruistic towards their peers, rather than those who focused on other's thoughts. Particularly in young children, affective perspective-taking is better developed and children benefit from responding to other's feelings (Oswald, 1996).

Furthermore, some studies with adults have shown a positive relationship between empathy and cognitive perspective-taking (Eisenberg, Zhou, & Koller, 2001), whereas other studies with children have shown no correlation between the two (Astington & Jenkins, 1995; Hughes, White, Sharpen, & Dunn 2000). Hinnant and O'Brien's findings (2007) have also not linked cognitive perspective-taking to empathy skills in preschool children, suggesting that cognitive perspective-taking occurs as children grow older (Hinnant & O'Brien, 2007); whereas other researchers have found affective perspective-taking skills to be related to empathy in children even before preschool age (Decety & Sommerville, 2003; Vaish, et al., 2009). Finally, Hoffman (2000) suggested that a possible reason for the association between affective perspective-taking and empathy in preschoolers was that it allowed children to take into account the feelings of others instead of waiting for the others to reveal their feelings to them.

Another study by Hinnant and O'Brien (2007) examined whether affective and cognitive perspective-taking skills were related to empathy in 57, five-year-old children. The cognitive task administered was adapted from Taylor's work (1988). It involved a puppet who was not able to hear what the researcher and the child were discussing while looking at different pictures (e.g., mouse and a cat, witch and rabbit and elephant and giraffe). Later on, the researcher covered parts of the pictures which made some not

recognizable, some easily recognizable, and some semi-recognizable. The child was then asked whether the puppet knew about the characters in the picture that were covered by the researcher (Hinnant & O'Brien, 2007). The affective perspective task was adapted from Denham (1986) where children had to match emotion labels to the puppets' expressed feelings. However, before the task was administered, the children's mothers filled out a questionnaire to explain how their children would react in certain situations. During the task, the researchers deliberately made the puppet react differently than how the children would react, to see if the children would still be able to correctly label the puppet's expressed feelings by using affective perspective-taking skills (Hinnant & O'Brien). Finally, Strayer's (1993) Empathy Continuum Scoring System was administered. The empathy task involved children watching four short video clips and then matching their feelings with a label from a list given to them (e.g., happy, sad, angry, afraid, neutral). At the end of each video, children described how they felt and the reasons for that and also how the characters in the video felt and why. Results from the three tasks showed that children who did well in the cognitive perspective task and the affective perspective task, did better in the empathy task as well (Hinnant & O'Brien). Thus, the current research focused on the similar age range of 5-6- year-old children who have already developed affective perspective and empathy skills and therefore could benefit from the workshop. Another recent study by Harwood and Farrar (2006) examined the relation between affective perspective-taking and theory of mind. In this study, Denham's (1986) affective labelling task was used to identify the puppets' emotions with two labels of happy and sad emotions in 42, three- to five-year-old preschoolers where the children had to point at the label matching the puppet's feelings in

a certain situation. In addition, an affective perspective task was administered to measure children's capability to infer their own and their friend's emotions in a specific situation. This task included oral stories with four conditions of the two friends: happy-happy, sad-sad, happy-sad, sad-happy. In the first condition, the story was about the child and his friend getting to eat the cookies they wanted which would make them both feel happy. In the second condition, the story was about the child and his friend falling down and hurting themselves, which would make them both sad. In the third condition, the story was about the child winning a game while his friend lost a game, where the child would feel happy, yet his friend would feel sad. In the fourth condition, the story was about the friend of the child being invited to a party, yet that child would not be invited, which would make the friend happy and the child sad. Results showed that there was a positive correlation of affective perspective-taking and theory of mind when children's feelings would be different than their friend's feelings; showing that children's ability to distinguish their emotions from their friend's emotions and to understand false beliefs were associated features of social development. In this way, children who were able to understand their friend's understanding of a situation and the feelings they develop in that situation, were able to make and maintain relationships with their peers in preschool (Harwood & Farrar, 2006).

In an earlier study, Wellman, Phillips and Rodriguez (2000) reported that 21, two-year-old children, were able to tell whether a child had received an object that he/she liked, based on his/her facial expression. This study was significant as it showed that children as early as 2- years- old, could understand another child's feelings while disregarding their own like or dislike of that specific object. Similarly, research by

Denham (1986) studied whether children were able to recognize a puppet's emotional reaction to a certain situations which was unexpected for the children. In this study, children were asked if they liked dogs or not, and based on their answers, the puppet reacted differently than how they would react when facing a dog and yet, children could still guess the puppet's feelings in that situation even if it did not match their feelings at all (Denham, 1986). The ability to predict another's feelings and emotional conditions from a very young age helps children to construct optimistic social relations and communication with their peers (Hughes & Dunn, 1998). Not only has affective perspective-taking allowed children to support others, but has also been found to be positively correlated to receiving from others; children who were able to guess what their peers' emotions were, also benefited from their peers returning help and support to them and this in turn, enhanced prosocial behaviour in children (Cassidy, Werner, Rourke, & Zubernis, 2003).

Researchers have also found a relation between children's affective perspective-taking skills and their experience in talking about their feelings with their parents and siblings (e.g., Dunn, 1998; 1999). Therefore, it is possible that children who experience talking about their feelings with their peers, especially during positive social interactions, also learn affective perspective-taking skills (Burleson & Kunkel, 2002).

Cassidy et al. (2003), examined whether 3- to 6- year olds' understanding of affective perspective-taking lead them to behaving more prosocially. Behaviour observations, teacher reports, peer ratings, and individual emotion and mental state measurements of 67 children were observed. The study also used Denham's (1986) affective labelling task as described above, examining children's ability to acknowledge

other people's feelings in different situations through stories and puppetry. Teachers reported that children who had cognitive and affective perspective-taking skills engaged in more prosocial activities (Cassidy et al., 2003). Also, peers rated children who had perspective-taking skills as more prosocial, because they correctly inferred how the other was feeling and acted accordingly in that situation; they were also more liked by their peers and received more cooperation from them (Cassidy et al., 2003). Finally, children's language skills were positively related to prosocial behaviours and the authors concluded that adequate language skills impacted children's performance when they used perspective-taking and empathy skills (Eisenberg et al., 2006; Harwood & Farrar, 2006; Iannotti, 1985; Wellman et al., 2000).

A study conducted by Grizenko et al. (2002) with 36 children aged 8-to-11, examined the effectiveness of a modified social skills program by focusing on the perspective-taking skills. Their approach was based on McGinnis and Goldstein's (1997) 'Skills Streaming Approach'. This approach included a social skills program with sessions of introducing self, joining in activities, acknowledging feelings, being able to manage emotions and engaging in prosocial behaviours (Grizenko et al., 2000). The social skills program was suitable for all children and not only children with behaviour, learning or developmental problems (Goldstein & McGinnis, 1997). The teachers used role-play to practice the new social skills, rehearsals of the learnt social skills, modeling and reinforcement for using the new learnt skills, and problem solving techniques (Grizenko et al., 2000). The study showed that these children understood the tasks of affective perspective-taking. Results also revealed that children who participated in the modified version of the social skills program focusing on learning perspective-taking

skills had short-term effects of increasing children's level of self and others' perspective-taking and long-term effects of improving in school (i.e., increase in physical, cognitive, and general self-competence in children) (Grizenko et al., 2000).

Another study emphasized the use of empathy skills within a social skills program (Strayer & Roberts, 2004; 1993). Twenty-four, 5-year-old children watched video clips of six different vignettes with negative and positive situations to examine their affective perspectives of their own and others' emotions (Strayer & Roberts, 2004). However, they also conducted observations during free play time to examine how these children would behave when interacting with previously unacquainted peers. The hypothesis of the study was that children who were empathic would be engaged in prosocial behaviour and would not succumb to anger and/or aggression during group play. The findings supported their hypothesis and this study was the first to examine empathy through observation during play (Strayer & Roberts, 2004). Nevertheless, past research has suggested that emotional knowledge is vital during the development of empathy skills, because when children have an understanding of emotions, they will be able to recognize various emotions in others' expressions (e.g., Rothbart, Ahadi, & Hershey, 1994; Valiente et al., 2004).

Emotional knowledge and regulation of emotions

Emotional knowledge is defined by many researchers as the ability to acknowledge emotions and comprehend the situations which lead to expression of specific emotions (Arsenio, 2003; Denham et al., 2002; Dodge, Laird, Lochman, Zelli, & Group, 2002; Izard et al., 2001); and these socio-emotional skills have been thought to be

an important part of children's development (Halberstadt, Denham, & Dunsmore, 2001; Saarni, 1999).

According to Miller et al. (2005), children lacking emotional knowledge will end up using aggression and violence to express their feelings. As early as 3-years-of-age, children can understand how others feel or act through their facial expressions and actions (Denham & Kochanoff, 2002; Lagattuta, Wellman, & Flavell, 1997; Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000), as they start relating internal processes (i.e. thought) to external actions (i.e., behaviour) (Baird & Moses, 2001; Wellman, Cross, & Watson, 2001); and begin to develop theory of mind (Carlson, Moses, & Claxton, 2004).

A wealth of studies supported the notion that children not only should know what emotions represent, but also learn how to regulate their emotions in socially acceptable manners (e.g., Denham et al., 2003; Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Morris, 2002; Halberstadt et al., 2001). Emotional regulation has been defined by various researchers as the internal and external processes which commence, sustain, and modify emotions (Eisenberg & Morris, 2002; Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004; Grolnick, Bridges, & Connell, 1996; Thompson, 1994). Therefore the study of emotional regulation focuses on the processes needed to manage and control emotions especially in young children, who are developing cognitive and emotional skills (Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007).

Children who experience difficulties in emotional management have been found to experience more negative behaviours and psychopathology and fewer positive social behaviours and academic success than children who are better at regulating their emotions (Cole, Teti & Zahn-Waxler, 2003; Howse, Calkins, Anastopoulos, Keane, & Shelton, 2003; Rydell, Berlin, & Bohlin, 2003). In addition, children who experience

more negative emotions have been found to exhibit anger, nervousness, fear and may encounter emotional and social difficulties in the future (Morris et al., 2002a; Morris et al., 2002b).

Past research on emotional knowledge and regulation tasks with children have used techniques to engage children in interesting activities, such as through pictures and dolls (Minnis et al., 2006), puppetry (Denham & Couchoud, 1990; Measelle, Ablow, Cowan, & Cowan, 1998), and play (Denham, 1997; Denham & Couchoud, 1990). A recent study by Cole et al. (2008) adapted Denham's puppetry technique to study how children learn to cope with anger and sadness. One hundred and sixteen 3- and 4-year-old children were given three different strategies to choose from to help the puppets stop feeling those negative feelings of anger and sadness. The puppets were used to first express positive feelings, and then negative feelings, and the puppet would ask the children directly what to do to stop feeling that way. Results showed that 4-year-old children were better able to choose the right strategies to stop the feelings of anger than 3-year-olds; and both 3- and 4-year-old children were able to choose the right strategies to stop the feelings of sadness. A reason for the age difference results could be due to the children's language development skills (Cole et al., 2008). This was another reason for the current study to focus on 5-6- year- old children as they have already developed their language and are able to verbally express themselves.

Some factors have an impact on emotion knowledge and management, as they may modify how children express or regulate their emotions (Buss, Brooker, & Leuty, 2008). These factors include the child's environment (Kahana-Kalman & Walker-Andrews, 2001) the child's gender (Morris et al., 2002a); the child's physiological

structures (Haley & Stansbury, 2003); the child's behaviour (Zimmerman & Stansbury, 2003); the child's temperament (Goldsmith & Davidson, 2004); and the child's parents' temperament (Lengua & Kovacs, 2005).

Parenting and emotional regulation

Past research has also indicated that the quality of the relationship between children and parents, the type of parental control, and their involvement in their children's lives have an impact on children's emotional knowledge and regulation development (e.g., Grusec, 1997). In addition, children's temperament, such as behaviour problems, negative or positive affect, fearfulness and irritability have an impact on parents' responsiveness, control, and involvement in their children's lives (Braungart-Rieker, Garwood, & Stifter, 1997).

Gilliom, Shaw, Beck, Schonberg, and Lukon (2002) stated that children, who were closely or positively attached to their parents early on, developed emotional regulation. Gilliom et al. (2002) found that children, who developed close attachment to their parents at the age of 18 months, had more effective emotional regulation at the age of 3 than those who did not develop close attachments. Furthermore, Contreras, Kerns, Weimer, Gentzler and Tomich (2000), found that children in fifth grade who reported having a secure attachment with their parents at younger ages showed more emotional regulation and ability to cope with difficult situations.

Therefore, when close bonds are created between parents and children, parents teach their children about emotions and how to regulate them in different situations, especially when communicating with others (Fivush, 2007; Katz & Windecker-Nelson, 2004; Lagace-Seguin & Coplan, 2005; Lagace-Seguin & d'Entremont, 2006;

Lunkenheimer, Shields, & Cortina, 2007; Morris et al., 2007; Shipman, Schneider, & Fitzgerald, 2007; Stocker, Richmond, Rhoades, & Kiang, 2007). An important aspect here is that parents need to identify and be familiar with their own emotions as what they teach their children is directly linked to how they think about and use their emotions (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997). Similarly, recent studies on the topic have found that parent characteristics such as mental health, had an impact on the socialization process of emotional regulation in their children (Morris et al. 2007; Saarni, Campos, Camras, & Witherington, 2006). In addition, the climate of the family has been found to play an important role in the development of emotion knowledge and regulation, suggesting that the parenting style, the attachment relationships, and family expressiveness of emotions lead to greater emotional regulation development in children.

Parents who have open communications with their children concerning emotions, give children greater understanding of emotions and how to regulate them (Gentzler, Contreras-Grau, Kerns, & Weimer, 2005; Lutz, Hock, & Kang, 2007). Furthermore, parents discussing emotions with their children have led them to develop prosocial behaviours and positive emotional results (Cervantes & Seo, 2005; Katz & Windecker-Nelson, 2004). In addition, parents who not only discuss emotions, but also who value teaching the meaning of emotions to their children result in having children with greater knowledge about emotions and how to regulate them (Denham & Kochanoff, 2002). More specifically, Cervantes and Seo (2005), and Dunsmore and Karn (2004), have found that children, whose parents coached them to understand their emotions from a young age, were more understanding of emotions, could express themselves and made good friendships in preschool. In addition, families who encouraged positive expression

of emotion in their homes and who accepted the exhibition of emotions by their children, had children who were more understanding of emotions and were more capable of regulating their emotions than those parents who did not incorporate those behaviours in the home setting (Denham et al., 2003).

Saarni, Mumme and Campos (1998) stated that the process whereby children seek information from their parents on how to act in different situations is similar to social referencing. A study conducted by Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Aucoin and Keyes (2007a) found that parents used social referencing by constructing strategies for their children to escape from negative emotions and create positive ones. For example, when children were given unsatisfying prizes in an event (e.g., socks), their parents used techniques to change the utilisation of the prize to make it more pleasant for their children and give them ideas of what they could use them for (e.g., "we could use these new socks to make puppets"), (Morris et al., 2007a). This is similar to Gilliom et al.'s study (2002) who found that mothers, who altered their children's attention when they were stuck in a negative situation, resulted in having children with less exhibition of anger when placed in negative circumstances. In addition, Scaramella and Leve (2004) reported that mothers who shifted their children's behaviour in negative situations, encouraged children to internalize those efforts and learn to regulate their emotions independently. In contrast, when children were experiencing negative emotions and their parents built up the tension by adding their personal negative emotions to reduce children's negative emotions, children found it even more difficult to escape from those negative emotions and this resulted in their stress level being heightened (Scaramella & Leve, 2004).

Several studies support the premise that children model parents' emotional regulation strategies (Bandura, 1977; Moris et al., 2007a; Parke, 1994). According to Morris et al. (2007a), modeling suggests that "the parents' own emotional profiles and interactions implicitly teach children which emotions are acceptable and expected in the family environment, and how to manage the experience of those emotions" (Morris et al., 2007a, p. 365). Similarly, a study of Denham, Mitchell-Copeland, Strandberg, Auerbach and Blair (1997) showed that children learned from their parents that specific situations provoked specific emotional exhibition and by observing how their parents reacted to those situations, they developed similar strategies. Since the parents' role in children's emotion knowledge and regulation is vital, the current study also engages parents in order to understand how parents perceive their children's behaviours. Also, throughout the workshop sessions, their participation will reinforce children's learnt social skills in the home setting. Thus far, the importance of parents' influence on children's development of emotion knowledge and regulation is presented; but it is also important to mention the importance of peers and social relationships in children's emotion development.

Peer relations and emotional support

As children grow older, they approach their peers for emotional support (Buhrmester, 1996; Burleson & Kunkel, 1996; Cauce, Reid, Landesman, & Gonzales, 1990; Ladd & Kochenderfer, 1996; Newcomb, Bukowski, & Bagwell, 1999). Furthermore, children report that they appreciate their peers' emotional support (Berndt & Perry, 1986; Clark, 1994). Burleson and Kunkel (2002) observed that when children interacted with peers who were able to give them emotional support, they learned from

them. It has also been suggested that during the school age years, peers have a more powerful influence on each other than children's parents (Harris, 1998; 2000).

In a research study on peer interaction, children's emotional support was examined using various tasks (Burleson & Kunkel, 2002). One task involved comforting communication and included two hypothetical stories to examine how children would react to their peers in those situations. The first story was about comforting a friend who was not invited to a classmate's birthday party and the second story was about comforting a friend who did not do well on a school test. The affective perspective-taking task which was adapted from Rothenberg (1970) was also used to examine if children could understand how their peer would feel in a specific situation and why. It consisted of four video clips with different stories eliciting various types of negative emotions and after watching the tapes, children were asked questions about how the character was feeling and the reasons for that feeling (Burleson & Kunkel, 2002).

The children's mothers were also included in the study, to examine their comforting skills and were asked to describe how they would comfort their child in two hypothetical situations (Applegate, Burke, Burleson, Delia, & Kline, 1985). The first hypothetical situation concerned their child being sad because he/she was not invited to a classmate's party; the second story was about their child being disappointed because he/she did not get the gift his father had promised him. Results revealed that the mothers' responses to their children's hypothetical situations were similar to the interactions they encountered with their children in an observation task lasting one- and-a- half hours (Applegate, 1980; Kochanska, Kuczynski, & Radke-Yarrow, 1989; Kochanska, 1990). Results from this study showed that both mothers' and peers'

comforting skills were correlated with children's comforting abilities (Burleson & Kunkel, 2002). As mentioned earlier, peer emotional support is very beneficial to children; however, another aspect which is beneficial to children is the creation of productive peer relationships which can arise through peer social interaction (Chen & Bullock, 2004).

Importance of social skills

The development of social skills is a necessary characteristic in children's lives as it gives them the ability to collaborate and cooperate with others, the ability to make choices and judgments, and work through dilemmas and difficulties (Malinauskas, 2001). Fussell, Macias and Saylor (2005), claimed that social skills could influence children's everyday routines including the quality of their daily lives and their social, academic, and professional abilities and their management in later life (Gresham, 1998). Gresham and Elliott (1990) defined social skills as the socially desired behaviours which promote positive social relationships and prosocial behaviours towards the others.

Furthermore, Chen and Bullock (2004), claimed that social skills could help build constructive relations and diminish unconstructive ones. Social skills could improve behaviours such as sharing, helping others, and complimenting others and are known to be socially acceptable and appropriate actions (Elliott, Malecki & Demaray, 2001).

Social skills programs

Social skills programs offer children the ability to create and maintain friendships (e.g., Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001), interpersonal skills (e.g., Maag, 2006), communications skills (e.g., Lane, Givner, & Pierson, 2004), cooperation (e.g., Harrist & Bradley, 2003), problem solving and emotional regulation (e.g., Desbiens & Royer,

2003). Kidron and Fleischman (2006) suggested that one of the most effective ways in which prosocial behaviour could be developed in children, was through "school-wide programs designed to teach and model social skills" (p. 90).

There has been a debate in the field about the effectiveness of social skills programs; however, there is evidence that children have not been negatively affected by the outcomes of the programs (Kavale & Mostert, 2004; Schneider, 1992). Instead, the majority of the programs have resulted in positive effects in children (Kavale & Mostert, 2004), especially children who lack social skills or have poor social skills (Van Schoiach-Edstrom, Frey, & Beland, 2002). Taub (2001) reported that intervention programs aimed at teaching children prosocial behaviours were more beneficial for children compared to programs aimed at reducing negative behaviours.

Children with ADHD, autism, or other developmental or intellectual disabilities require social skills programs (e.g., Dykens, 2007), but many children with or without emotional and behavioural problems would also benefit from these programs (e.g., Scope, Empson, McHale, & Nabuzoka, 2007). However, most research on building social skills interventions has focused on children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as children with autism (e.g., McConnell, 2002). Nevertheless, the present study included children regardless of their behavioural, emotional, intellectual and social skills. It is believed that when social skills are taught to them from a very young age, they may benefit from them in developing prosocial behaviours.

Social skills programs which focus on children's individual strengths and needs have shown to be effective (Chen & Bullock, 2004; Gresham et al., 2001; Quinn, Kavale, Marthur, Rutherforrd, & Forness, 1999). The current study also took into account the

children and the context of their families by asking them questions regarding their peer and family relations in order to ensure the program will be beneficial to them. According to past research, social skills programs have been most effective when their duration was at least two to three hours per week for a period of 10 weeks (Forness & Kavale, 1999; Gresham et al., 2001; Quinn et al., 1999). Past studies also suggested that 7-12 session social skills programs have been found to be statistically significant in decreasing negative behaviours for short-term effects and 20-24 one-hour sessions for long-term effects (e.g., Ison, 2001; Preece & Mellor, 2009; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2001). Therefore, the current study was conducted over a period of eight weeks, with two hour sessions per week to ensure that the children had an adequate time to practice their social skills in the workshop, classroom and home setting.

Successful social skills programs

There have been some successful programs which have worked with children with or without behavioural and emotional problems, their families and schools. Five of these programs are described in this review to identify the essential ingredients of a good social skills program.

One of them is the 'Scallywags' project which is an intervention program with the goal to decrease behavioural, emotional and social problems at the home and school settings in 3 to 7-year-old children (Lovering & Caldwell, 2003). The intervention program contains ten sessions lasting two hours with themes related to feelings, analyzing and observing behaviour, changing behaviour, discipline, home-school relationships, crisis management, playing, self-esteem, and bullying. The activities are interactive and visual and written materials are used. In addition, parent games are

constructed to be taken home so that children can practice the skills in the home setting as well as the school setting (Lovering & Caldwell). Lovering, Frampton, Crowe, Moseley and Broadhead (2006) found significant negative behaviour reductions at home and at school in children who participated in the program.

Another successful social skills program for children is 'The Playing and Learning to Socialize' (PALS) Program which has been used in over 300 schools in Australia (Cooper, Paske, deHaan, & Zuzic, 2002). It consists of ten sessions lasting between 20 and 30 minutes and includes activities of skills, including greeting others, turn-taking, sharing, empathy, dealing with fear and angry feelings. The program is divided into two parts, the first covering social skills such as greeting, sharing and turn-taking; and the second part teaches self-management skills, such as dealing with stressful situations and managing angry feelings. Activities include video-modeling, storytelling using puppets, role-playing and play activities. The PALS program also includes teachers and parents with selected tasks and activities to help children practice their newly acquired skills. Research conducted by Ogden, Forgatch, Askeland, Patterson and Bullock (2005) on the PALS program, showed a decrease in behavioural problems in children in 8 different Norwegian schools. James and Mellor (2006) conducted their study with 42 children in England and showed that there was a 98% significant difference in the reduction of behavioural problems in children who used the PALS program and those who did not.

'The Teaching Pyramid' is another successful program which has lead to increased social skills and prosocial behaviours in children, as well as supported children with severe behavioural problems individually (e.g., Fox, Dunlap, & Cushing, 2002a;

Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, & Strain, 2003; Fox, Dunlap, & Powell, 2002b). It includes sessions of teaching children about social skills and daily routines by using their surrounding environment to meet their needs (Strain & Hemmeter, 1999). It consists of four levels; first, it promotes building positive relationships with children and their families by teaching about trust, respect and feelings; second, it promotes class participation by creating a positive, proactive, classroom environment; third, it focuses on building social relations by encouraging friendships through recognition, prompting, and play activities; and fourth, it focuses on children's individualized positive behaviour support and reinforcement through one on one guiding and instruction (Fox et al., 2003).

The 'Positive Behaviour Support' (PBS) program, is a group-work project which has been used in school settings aimed at teaching children prosocial behaviours, social and emotional skills by encouraging and supporting them in using positive learning opportunities (Fox et al., 2002b; Conroy & Brown, 2004). The implementation of the PBS program has resulted in decrease in behavioural problems in children (Sadler, 2000; Stormont, Lewis, & Beckner, 2005), even at the preschool level (Benedict, Horner, & Squires, 2007). Teachers planned activities such as storytelling, art projects, songs and games to teach children how to resolve conflicts and to develop and maintain friendships (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000).

Another program that has been very effective in decreasing negative behaviour in children and promoting prosocial behaviour through role-play, discussions and modeling is called 'The Second Step Program' (SSP) (McMahon, Washburn, Felix, Yakin, & Childrey, 2000). The Second Step Program for the pre-school/kindergarten level, includes 10 sessions lasting from 15 to 25 minutes each. First, physical activities, songs

and puppetry are used to introduce the theme, followed by the story discussion which includes showing pictures and talking about their significance. Lastly, role play, including dramatizing new skills and feelings that they are taught are used to reinforce these skills (SSO, 2007). The lesson is divided into three sections: Empathy training, Impulsive Control and Anger Management. To begin with the first unit which is empathy training, it helps children learn to identify feelings, predict what others feel and show others that they care. This is found to help children when they are upset (SSP, 1991).

The second unit addresses the impulsive control where children learn to solve problems and perform social skills (SSP, 1991). It includes two strategies: The first one is the interpersonal cognitive problem-solving unit that teaches children reasoning steps applied to social situations; the second one is the behavioural social skills training which teaches target behaviours (e.g., apologizing). In this unit, two puppets are included, the impulsive puppy and the slow-down snail; these puppets, are used to introduce a problem to the children and later on work to find a solution to solve that problem, while making the class activities interactive. They are symbolic as the impulsive puppy represents the negative behaviour, and the slow-down snail represents the prosocial behaviour.

 The third unit, anger management, teaches children to calm down and redirect their feelings in a more positive way (SSP, 1991). The Social skills Program (1991) stated that anger, as an emotion is not the problem, but what one does with it can become a problem. Therefore, it seeks to break or reverse the cycle of anger escalation by substituting negative coping with positive coping statements and psychological techniques. Hence, it suggests the use of positive self-statements, relaxation techniques

to help prevent angry feelings and promote reflection on the anger provoking incident (SSP, 1991). It also empowers children to be confident and to trust their own judgment (SSO, 2007).

Grossman et al. (1997) showed that prosocial behaviours increased among children using the Second Step Program. In addition, physical aggression decreased and they continued to show lower levels of aggression even six months after the intervention. Similarly, McMahon et al. (2000) reported that after one year of the program's implementation in an elementary school, children demonstrated increased knowledge of social skills. Also, Taub (2001) found that students who received this program showed an increase of social competence and a decrease in antisocial behaviour. More specifically, children showed higher levels of peer interaction skills and rule-adherence, compared to children in the control condition.

Van Schoiak-Edstrom, Frey and Beland (2002) also found that children using the Second Step program showed decreased endorsements of physical aggression and perceived fewer social difficulties. Their results also indicated that the program had the potential of modifying attitudes toward aggression. In addition, McMahon's and Washburn's (2003) results showed that students using the program increased their social skills knowledge, prosocial and empathy skills. Similarly, Frey, Nolen, Edstrom and Hirschstein (2005) found that the program helped the participating students resolve conflicts, avoid bitter disputes, and behave in a more socially competent manner than students who did not participate in the program within the same school context.

The current study borrowed many positive aspects from the programs described earlier and implemented them in the social skills program. The aspects included

interactive activities as in this way, children could understand more difficult concepts when they are incorporated in their play and interactive games; group play, as it was important for children to communicate, collaborate and work as a team to accomplish some goals; role play; as it was important for children to be able to put themselves in others' position, and act how others would feel in certain situations; expression of feelings as through this act, many children would be able to open up as well as understand others' feelings; and storytelling, as children would be able to understand concepts such as kindness or trust when a story explains their significance in an amicable way. The elements which are important for social skills programs to be successful are described below, and include: the learning style of the workshop, the group size for the workshop, the materials for the workshop, the structure, the setting, and the teacher's role in the workshop.

Elements of successful social skills programs

Learning style in social skills program

Since peers influence children's emotions and behaviours, collaborative learning would benefit many children. Therefore, social skill programs that include children who are able to model prosocial behaviours and encourage peer interaction with children with behavioural, emotional or social issues can be quite influential with their peers (e.g., Desbiens & Royer, 2003). According to Farmer (2000), when children of same ages are put together in a group, their behaviours become coordinated and similar to each others. This can occur during cooperative play and games, when children learn to support, help, and trust each other; and when they work together and are given the opportunity to share materials and ideas (e.g., Desbiens & Royer, 2003; Grumple & Golan, 2000; Honig,

2002; Kolb & Weede, 2001; Orlick, 1981). It is also important for the cooperative games to be well-designed and structured so that young children can follow them (Vermette, Harper, & DiMillo, 2004).

Chen and Bullock (2004) suggested that structured and cooperative learning activities could help children with behaviour issues to develop social skills. Also, these programs could help children learn more about what prosocial behaviour is and as Hemmeter, Ostrosky and Fox (2006) claimed, "When they know what to do, how to do it, and what is expected" (p. 951), then they may not result in exhibiting negative behaviours.

The inclusion of all children, both those who lack social skills and those who excel at them, is defined as the *peer-mediator approach* by Harrist and Bradley (2003). This approach is important because many children who are familiar with social skills promote their use and initiate their peers' use of the skills as well (Desbiens & Royer, 2003). Moreover, children who have more experience in using the social skills can practice those skills with their peers outside the social skills workshop classroom; therefore, expanding the use of the social skills (Desbiens & Royer, 2003). The practice of social skills outside the workshop classroom is not only beneficial to children in maintaining the skills they have learnt in the workshop, but it also helps children to form close friendship bonds with their peers outside the workshop classroom (Landy, 2002). The current study encouraged the peer-mediator and collaborative learning approach as it aimed to bring children closer together and learn social, empathy, and affective perspective-taking skills together and from one another.

Group size in social skills program

Research conducted by Finn, Pannozzo and Achilles (2003), suggested that children benefit from learning in small groups "regardless of the methods or measures employed" (Finn et al., 2003, p. 333). Also, small teacher-child ratios have been useful to children in making new friends and learning skills about how to deal with problems and disagreements with peers (Posner & Vandell, 1999).

In a study conducted by Webster-Stratton and Reid (2003) 6, four- to eight-year-old children participated in the Dina Dinosaur Treatment Program for 18 weeks, which included role-play, modeling, following instructions, reinforcement and warm-up exercises to decrease children's negative conduct. Their parents also attended parenting workshops lasting 22 weeks. Results showed that children were able to better regulate their emotions, and act more prosocially by the end of the program and results showed that the small group size in their study was as effective as including parents in the study in decreasing conduct disorders in children from a young age.

The current study focused on having a small group of children (9 children) so that they would have the opportunity to get to know the other children participating in the workshop sessions, develop close bonds with one another, feel encouraged to participate in the games, activities and discussions, and form a relationship with the workshop teacher more effectively and efficiently than they would in larger groups.

Materials used in social skills program

Since cooperative play and group size gives children the opportunity to use social skills, some interactive materials and games may also promote these social skills that may enhance the prosocial behaviour, particularly when these materials require more than one

child's assistance (Honig, 2002; Ivory & McCollum, 1999; Orlick, 1981; Schmuck, 2001). The study of Ivory and McCollum (1999) examined the use of social and isolate toys in peer interactions in two classrooms of preschoolers with disabilities over a period of four weeks, and found that social toys encouraged children to become engaged in cooperative play. Research also found that young children's positive behaviour could be observed through their interaction with materials such as puppets and dolls and when listening to stories (Bettmann & Lundahl, 2007). The current study employed the use of social toys to encourage collaborative play in children; and symbolic toys to encourage imagination in children while playing with the materials provided to them. For example, a symbolic item could be toy such as a ball representing a hot potato, where the children could help each other by bouncing the ball on their hands so that their friends' hands would not burn.

Structure of social skills program

The structure of a program may also influence the development of social skills. Using multi-component social skills programs are beneficial to children (Gansle, 2005); therefore, the current study uses a multi-component program by including story telling, role-play, play and discussions so that children would be engaged in a diverse set of activities all aimed at increasing their prosocial behaviour and enhancing their affective perspective and empathy skills.

According to Skaines, Rodger and Bundy (2006), play is vital in children's development especially in developing social skills and social relationships. It has been defined as a "primary context for the acquisition and expression of key social competencies" (Mendez & Fogle, 2002, p. 370) for example, sharing toys, taking turns

and communicating, to promote children's ability to interact with others (Bruder & Chen, 2007). In addition, Mendez and Fogle (2002) found in their study that play encouraged children to be more involved in the classroom setting and the better they were in playing, the more inspired and attentive they were in the classroom. Role-play also helps children understand more clearly what the lessons in the social skills workshop represent, especially when they are younger in age and cannot fully comprehend why the skills are useful to them (Frey et al., 2000). Story-telling enhances children's oral and listening skills (Caulfield, 2000; Groce, 2001) and gives them the possibility of knowing more about their "social, emotional, and cognitive functioning", especially when children are telling personal stories (Bettmann & Lundahl, 2007, p. 470). Stories can also nurture children's imagination and assist them in mental visualization (Baker & Greene, 1977). This is why the present study incorporated play to encourage children to interact with one another; included stories to promote children's active participation in expressing their feelings, ideas, and thoughts; and role play, to encourage children to understand how others feel and act in different situations. Thus, the current study integrated play, role-play, and story telling during the social skills workshop so that children would understand the importance of prosocial behaviour and social skills more effectively and efficiently.

Setting of social skills program

It has been suggested that social skills programs have been effective when used in classroom settings in schools (Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 2001; Han, Catron, Weiss, & Marciel, 2005). Nevertheless, research has not given much thought to implementing social skills programs during afterschool programs (Riggs & Greenberg, 2004). Snyder and Sickmund (1999) indicated that the hours following school were the

most unsupervised, especially the hours between 2 to 6 p.m., as many parents work during those hours and the children are left alone in the home setting without the supervision of their parents.

In addition, Riggs and Greenberg (2004) recommended that children below the age of eight, may benefit more academically than older children registered in afterschool programs. A reason for this may be due to the fact that older children who attend after-school programs, may already exhibit some behavioural problems which have an effect on their academic skills and that is the reason they are attending the program (Vandell & Posner, 1999). Research reported that the role of afterschool programs was primarily to give children a secure and organized atmosphere where they could spend their time at the end of the school day (Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005). It was also suggested that in this way, children whose parents were working could spend some time with adults qualified in childhood education and could be encouraged to develop socially as well as academically (Junge, Johns, George, Conklin-Ginop, & Valdez, 2000; Mahoney et al., 2005).

According to Junge, Manglallan and Raskauskas (2003), the collaboration with adults and other peers through group activities in the afterschool programs, guided children to gain "improved life skills" (Junge et al., 2003, p. 166). Another positive aspect of afterschool programs is the fact that they do not follow the school routine, and therefore require "different skills than those required during the school day" from children (Mahoney et al., 2005, p. 204). In this way, children may develop learning techniques through their participation in activities and assignments during the afterschool

program that may complement their school learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Slavin, 2000).

Research has shown that children who participated in afterschool programs were given the opportunity to initiate new relationships with peers and to make new friends (Mahoney et al., 2005; Sandstrom & Coie, 1999). Furthermore, it gave children the possibility to work on their social skills in communicating with others and learning ways to work as a team, (Barber, Stone, Hunt, & Eccles, 2005; Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003). In this way, children who gained new friendships through cooperation with other children in the afterschool programs continued making friends in the classroom and the school in general.

Sandstrom and Coie (1999) reported that peer acceptance and building of friendships was positively correlated with participation in afterschool programs. A strong argument suggested by Vandell, Shernoff, Pierce, Bolt, and Fu (2003) was that when children learned about prosocial behaviour from a young age in afterschool programs, they were likely to exhibit prosocial behaviour in the future.

Teacher's role in social skills program

According to past research, young children's social skills were mostly influenced by their relationship with their teachers and this may have been a contributing factor for teaching children social skills (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). Therefore, social skills workshop facilitators should cooperate with the teachers of the children to reinforce the workshop goals on a daily basis (Rotheram-Borus, Bickford, & Milburn, 2001). Hyson (2004) also suggested that children who had positive relations with their teachers developed awareness of their behaviours. Similarly, Johansson (2002)

observed 30 teachers' ways of communicating with 3-year-old children and analyzed their ideas about how children learn through free play and group activities. Results suggested that when teachers showed thoughtfulness for others during free play or group activities (e.g., understanding other's feelings, sharing with others, respecting, negotiating, etc.), children learnt through these actions that the teachers modelled and they imitated them.

A successful way to teach social skills to children, according to Hemmeter et al. (2006), is for the methods of teaching to be clear and understandable. In addition, acting as good role-models, reinforcing positive behaviours, and guiding children to include those behaviours in their daily routines was also useful (Grisbam-Brown, Hemmeter, & Pretti-Frontczak, 2005; Landy, 2002). Research has also suggested that social skills are not always taught through teachers' interaction with children, but also through children's interaction with peers; and teachers offering the children advice and feedback on how to improve their social skill practices (e.g., Brown, Odom, & Conroy, 2001). The integration of social skills education in children's classroom (e.g., Helper, 1990) is important when the teacher builds a close relationship with the children (Elksnin & Elksnin, 1998; Gresham et al., 2001; Quinn, 2002; Strain & Smith, 1996). The current study included a close collaboration with the afterschool program educators who had already formed a close bond with the children and could therefore reinforce the newly learnt social skills from the workshop in the classroom setting.

It is evident that the role of teachers, parents, and peers is vital to children. These individuals become role-models to children and may impact the development of their social skills and social relations. The current study takes an ecological approach and

includes children, their peers, their parents and educators and builds an intervention (workshop) to promote children's social skills. This social skills program may provide children with the opportunity to learn the values related to expression of feelings, friendship, team-work, helpfulness, patience, kindness, trust and generosity. Internalizing these values could lead to prosocial behavior, increased understanding empathy and affective perspective-taking (Eisenberg, 2003; Eisenberg et al., 1991; 2001; 2006; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1990; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992; Strayer, 1993; Strayer & Roberts, 2004).

Therefore the present study examined the following three questions:

1. Did the children's participation in the social skills workshop have an influence on their prosocial behaviour (positive behaviour and social interaction)?

2. Did the children's participation in the social skills workshop influence their perceptions of affective perspective-taking and empathy?

3. How did the children who participated in the social skills workshop understand social skills? Did their views of social skills change as a result of the intervention?

Method

Design

The design of this study was a mixed methods exploratory design. This design was chosen to examine in an in-depth manner how children perceive their social behaviour and social relationships. In addition, an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of using an 8-week social skills program was also conducted using child, parent, educator and observer feedback. This was a case study as it intended to find out how these 9 children were influenced by the 8-week workshop they attended which taught them the ethical values associated with social skills. In particular, the children's affective perspective-taking and empathy skills were assessed to understand how this program influenced their prosocial behaviour during the social skills workshop.

Participants and setting

Convenience sampling was used to identify an elementary afterschool program in Montreal. According to Creswell (2007) this method of collecting a sample is based on the participants' availability and convenience to participate in the study. Therefore, the specific afterschool program was chosen as the researcher had established a close relationship and understood the content and context of their program. The program co-ordinator was approached and the purpose of the study was discussed. Children from different cultures and races, socio-economic backgrounds, with various physical and/or intellectual difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties were welcomed in the study as the workshop of social skills was designed for all children.

All 5- to 6- year-old students in the kindergarten and grade one class attending the afterschool program in the elementary school, received consent forms to take to their

parents (see Appendix A for consent form). Ten children, their parents and 3 educators consented to participate in the study, of which one child withdrew due to inconvenience of the workshop time. In the study, there were 6 kindergarten students and 3 grade 1 students (mean age: 5.33); 6 boys and 3 girls. The children's first spoken language was English. The children participating in the study were asked questions about their behaviours and were asked to answer questions on some vignettes prior to the commencement of the social skills workshop and at the end of the 8-week workshop intervention period (see Appendices D, E and F).

In addition, the 9 children's parents were given consent forms to participate in the study and complete a child questionnaire form, take home parent activity handouts and complete an evaluation form (see Appendix B for consent forms). Furthermore, 3 educators in the afterschool program were invited to participate and were given consent forms to sign to assess children's behaviour before and after the workshop, weekly poster activities and complete an evaluation form (see Appendix C for consent forms). The children who agreed to take part in the study attended a workshop for eight weeks, with two social skills sessions per week, each session lasting one hour (16 hours in total). Participant's confidentiality was of great importance to this study and the participants' identity and names were kept confidential by coding their names with numbers, both on the questionnaires and when interpreting data.

Procedure

The study commenced with the distribution of consent forms to the participants, asking children, parents, and educators to participate in the study. The participants were given 2 weeks to return the forms.

Prior to the workshop

Once the consent forms were returned, the Educator Behaviour Checklists were completed by the afterschool educators. These checklists were created by McGinnis and Goldstein (1997) and assessed children's behaviour (see Appendix H).

Parents completed a short child form in order to reveal their perceptions of their child's behaviour. The form was developed based on the work of Cole, Dennis, Smith-Simon and Cohen (2008). It contained a hypothetical story and after reading the story, parents were asked to respond in the manner that their child would respond to such a situation through four different choices. Also, parents briefly described how they would respond to that hypothetical situation (see Appendix G).

Prior to the commencement of the social skills program, children were individually interviewed in the cafeteria of the afterschool program. The interview lasted approximately 20 minutes per child. They were interviewed to get to know them better, as well as, to find out about their behaviour and social interactions. The interview included ten open-ended questions that were designed to elicit the children's opinions about their peer relations and behaviour in general (see Appendix D).

They were also asked to respond to affective perspective and empathy tasks. First, the affective perspective task included two vignettes of hypothetical stories adapted from the work of Denham (1986) (see Appendix E). For the first vignette, the child was given four facial expression cards and after four short sentences, the child chose which picture of feelings matched the story character's feelings. Second, the empathy vignette included two vignettes of hypothetical stories adapted from the work of Strayer (1993). After each story, the child was asked how the character of the story felt and why, and also

how s/he felt and why. In this way, children showed their understanding of empathy and whether they knew why others feel in certain ways, in certain situations. Following the "empathy" vignettes, children were also asked to draw a picture of how they would feel if they were in the story character's position. This would assess the children's recognition of emotions and their ability to express them (see Appendix F).

During the workshop

Once all the data were gathered, the workshop began with one hour sessions held twice a week, over a period of 8-weeks. Week 8 of the workshop was scheduled 3-weeks apart from week 7 of the workshop due to the Christmas holidays. The workshop included story-time discussions, social interactions, role-plays, as well as interactive games and activities. The program plan was prepared using my past experience in working with children and the literature on social skills programs. The lesson plans included the followed theme sessions: Expression of feelings, friendship, team-work, helpfulness, patience, kindness, trust and generosity (see Appendix J).

During the workshop, an observer blind to the goals of the study, who was a graduate student in the M.A. in Child Study program completed a behaviour checklist for 4 sessions, assessing the children's behaviour in the beginning, middle and end of each session. Observer reliability was assessed three times during this observation period, with a second observer who was also blind to the goals of the study. The checklist was based on the work of Gober (2002) and McAfee and Leong (2002) (see Appendix I). In addition, a poster was prepared every week and was given to the educators to remind children about what they learnt during that week through a story and questions related to that story (see Appendix K). Parent activity handouts were also sent home with children,

for parents to reinforce the workshop's weekly theme through a story and drawing activity (see Appendix M). Moreover, a researcher journal was kept throughout the workshop sessions to record any changes/adaptations or additions to the program or any important comments regarding the children.

Following the workshop

At the end of the 8-week workshop period, parents were asked to complete a short evaluation form giving their opinion about the program and the take-home activities (see Appendix N). In addition, educators completed the second behaviour checklists to examine children's behaviour following the workshop and a short evaluation form evaluating the effectiveness of the use of the poster activity that was used to reinforce the weekly social skills that the children learned each week (see Appendix L).

Furthermore, a second set of child interviews, vignettes and drawings were completed lasting approximately 20 minutes per child. They were asked questions about their views concerning the workshop they attended and about their behaviour and social interactions. The interview contained ten open-ended questions, where children gave their opinions about what they learnt from the workshop; what they liked best; and how it changed their behaviour (see Appendix D).

The children were also interviewed using the affective perspective and empathy tasks (see Appendix E). First, the affective perspective task included two vignettes of hypothetical stories. For the first vignette, the child was given four facial expression cards and after four short sentences, the child chose which picture of feelings matched the story character's feelings (see Appendix E). Second, the empathy vignette included two vignettes of hypothetical stories. After each story, the child was asked how the character

of the story felt and why and also how s/he felt and why. In this way, children showed

their understanding of empathy and whether they knew why others feel in certain ways in

certain situations. Following the "empathy" vignettes, children were also asked to draw a

picture of how they would feel if they were in the story character's position. This would

assess the children's recognition of emotions and their ability to express them (see

Appendix F). At the completion of each child interview session, the children were

thanked and given a certificate for their participation in the study (see Appendix O).

Materials

The materials in the current study were created to examine children's perceptions

of their behaviour, as well as their parents', educators' and observers' perceptions of the

children's behaviours. The sections below describe the measures that were given before,

during and after the implementation of the social skills workshop.

Child Interviews. Children were interviewed to assess their affective perspective

and empathy skills using interactive vignettes and drawings which took place before and

after the 8-workshop sessions. The first child interviews were constructed to get to know

the children and examine how they view their behaviour and social relationships (see

Appendix D). The second child interviews examined how children viewed the workshop,

what they learnt from the workshop activities and whether the workshop had an impact

on their behaviour (see Appendix D).

Child vignettes of affective perspective skills. Child vignettes of affective

perspective skills were used to examine how children perceived other's feelings. These

vignettes were adapted from Denham's (1986) affective labelling task (see Appendix E).

In Denham's study (1986), children were told stories involving a puppet of the same sex

as the child and four different emotion cards (happy, sad, angry, and scared) were given

to children to choose from. Of the 17 vignettes, the first 4 presented unequivocal

situations to the participant child (e.g., receiving some ice cream), and the remaining

scenarios were more vague (e.g., the character being approached by a big dog) (Denham,

1986). Children's mothers previously indicated whether their child would be happy or

sad to come to day care, afraid or pleased to see their doctor, angry or happy to come in

to dinner from play, and with food they would be happiest to eat. The participants were

asked to attach the proper face on the puppet, from the four identified in the previous

task, after seeing the vignette. Faces were attached in answer to the question, "How does

the puppet feel?" (Denham, 1986). For each scenario, the child received a score of two

for correct recognition of the emotional response of the puppet, a score of one for the

correct valence (positive or negative), and a score of zero for an incorrect response; total

scores could range from 0 to 26. This measure demonstrated acceptable reliability ($r=$

.77) (Hinnant & O'Brien, 2009). For the current study, four sentences were read to the

child. Scoring was one point for each correct response. The second portion of the task

was designed to examine children's prediction of their own and their friend's emotions

(Harwood & Farrar, 2006). The child was asked to name his/her best friend and was

given oral instructions about the affective perspective-taking task, explaining that the

child was going to hear short stories involving himself/herself and the friend. The

experimenter read 12 scenarios to the child and, after each one, asked how both the child

and friend would feel in the situation. The scenarios consisted of happy-happy (e.g.,

getting to eat the cookies they wanted); happy-sad (e.g., the child wins a game and the

friend loses); sad-happy (e.g., the friend receives an invitation to a party but the

participant is not invited); and sad-sad (e.g., falling down and cutting their knees).

Children received one point for each emotion they correctly predicted. Each child could receive a total of 24 points on this task, with 12 possible points for accurately predicting their own emotions and 12 points for accurately predicting their friend's emotion (Harwood & Farrar, 2006). Mean response for scenarios in which the child and friend felt the same emotion was 7.71 out of 12 possible points. For scenarios involving two different emotions the children received slightly higher scores, (M=8.38 out of 12) (Harwood & Farrar, 2006). For the current study, only four sentences were used to examine children's affective perspective-taking skills each containing a different expression of feelings. Each correct response scored one point; whereas each false response scored 0.

Child vignettes of empathy skills. Child vignettes of empathy skills were conducted to examine how children would react in different situations and it was adapted from Strayer's (1993) Empathy Continuum task (see Appendix E). Following the procedure from Strayer's study, children were shown pictures of faces displaying five different emotions (happy, mad, sad, scared, and neutral) to choose from. In Strayer's study (1993), four short (1–3 min) clips from older commercial movies and TV shows were used illustrating happy, sad, scared, or angry situations. After watching each video, children were asked how they felt, why they felt that way, how they thought the child in the video felt and why. In this study, children will be told two different stories and then asked how the character of the story felt and why, and how they felt and why. The first and second stories were related to one another and they were somewhat compelling; as in the first story the character who the child would presumably dislike would change in the

second story. In this way, the child's ability to empathise with disliked story characters would be analysed. Children received a score for each vignette on the basis of the match between their reported felt emotion and the intended emotion displayed in the vignette, the accuracy of their report of the emotion of the story character, and the reason the child made for why they felt the way they did. Scores ranged from 3–38. However, in this study scores ranged from 0-16; as accuracy for children's emotions to the story and correct response to the children's reasons for feeling that way, as well as accuracy in recognizing the story character's feelings and why the character feels that way, would each receive one point. The total score would be the sum of the scores for the four vignettes. Cronbach's alpha for the vignettes showed an acceptable reliability of (r = .74) (Hinnant & O'Brien, 2009).

Child drawings. Child drawings before and after the workshop were administered to assess how the drawings portrayed their responses to the affective perspective-taking and empathy vignettes; children were asked to draw how they would feel if they were in the story character's situation. These drawings were analysed for children's recognition of emotions and their ability to express them. The interviewer also took notes on what the children were saying as they were drawing (see Appendix F).

Parent-child questionnaire form. Parents completed a questionnaire before the workshop sessions assessing how their child would react to a hypothetical situation and how they would comfort their child in those situations. Parent child questionnaire forms were adapted from Cole et al.'s (2008) Emotion Regulation task (see Appendix G). To assess 5-year-old children's awareness of emotion regulatory strategies, a puppet procedure was designed. Three cloth puppets (Brownie, Red, and Mom) were used to

enact three vignettes. The first vignette involved the puppets being happy; the other two concentrated on sadness and anger (Cole et al., 2008). In each story, the reasons for the puppets' emotions and for needing to 'stop' feeling so angry or sad were passed to the child. The child was given the chance to make suggestions to the puppets and had three opportunities to recognize an effective strategy. Each puppet verbalized a strategy, one effective and one ineffective (e.g., hitting) or less effective (e.g., dwelling on a problem when one cannot do anything about it). The child's selection of the better strategy was scored as recognition of an effective, appropriate strategy. Reliability estimates were acceptable, with an average kappa of (r = .83) (Cole et al., 2008). The current study used the puppet sketch as a narrative story which was given to parents to read. The story did not include the mother puppet, so that the parents reading the story will have to respond to the puppets as if they were their parent. Following the story, parents were asked to describe in writing how they would respond to the puppets in the hypothetical situation to examine their parental style.

In addition, parents were asked to choose a response of how their child would respond to the puppets' issue without asking the child. In this way, the parents' perception of their child's behaviour would be analyzed. Scoring procedure was to give one point to the child if the parent chose a positive response for their child's behaviour to the hypothetical situation and 0 points if it was a negative response.

Educator Behaviour Checklist. Educators assessed children's behaviour using a behaviour checklist adapted from McGinnis and Goldstein (1997). It was given to the educators before and after the workshop sessions to examine how educators viewed the children's behaviour in the afterschool program setting (see Appendix H). McGinnis and

Goldstein (1997) described a "skill streaming" approach, which focused on the following four direct instruction principles of learning: modeling, role-playing, feedback, and transfer (McGinnis & Goldstein, 1997). The Skill streaming curriculum for elementary students consisted of sixty skills that were grouped into the following categories: classroom survival skills, friendship-making skills, skills for dealing with feelings, skill alternatives to aggression, and skills for dealing with stress (McGinnis & Goldstein, 1997). Teachers completed a likert-type scale questionnaire rating scale ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*), to describe the children's behaviour and interaction with peers in the classroom setting (e.g., communicates with others, plays appropriately with toys, participates in activities, etc.) (McGinnis & Goldstein, 1997). According to the manual, the Skill streaming curriculum was flexibly implemented to meet the needs of the students by encouraging professionals to select the targeted skills and to adjust the length of the program as deemed appropriate for the participants (Rahill & Teglasi, 2003). In this way, teachers who rated their student's behaviour would choose activities from the Skill streaming curriculum, such as introducing self, joining in, knowing feelings, self-control, dealing with anger, responding to teasing and staying out of fights (Grizenko et al., 2000). Inter-rater reliability for the teacher ratings was 90% (Rahill & Teglasi, 2003). The current study used the following behaviour categories of the teacher rating forms: Appropriate language, ignores distractions, participates in lesson, co-operative with peers, plays appropriately with objects, likes fair play, follows teacher rules, accepts rules of the class, avoids trouble, e.g., apologizes, shows self-control, waits for turn, shares with others, listens to others, helps others, joins in games/activities, expresses feelings, recognizes others' feelings, and respects others and property. The

educators were explained how to use the behaviour checklist and the behaviours were described to them by giving more specific examples if the behaviour subscales were not very clear to them (e.g., use of appropriate language could include complementing one another).

Observer Behaviour Checklist. In addition, children's behaviour was assessed during 4 workshop sessions by 2 graduate students serving as observers who were blind to the study. To accomplish inter-rater reliability one of the graduate students observed three times. Both observers recorded the children's behaviour using the Observer Behaviour Checklist using a frequency-sampling method of observation (see Appendix I). The Observer Behaviour Checklist was adapted from Gober (2002) to examine whether their behaviour would change throughout the workshop sessions (see Appendix I). Gober (2002), in her book "Six simple ways to assess young children", describes developmental checklists for children from birth to eight years of age in all areas of development including, physical, social, emotional and cognitive. The current study focused on the social and emotional growth in 5- to 6- year-old children which emphasize children's ability to interact with others and develop and express feelings as well as self-esteem. The Observer Behaviour Checklist based on Gober's (2002) developmental checklist for 5-to 6- year-old children includes self-control, help for others, respect for others, fair play, sharing and waiting for turn. In addition, the checklist borrowed some aspects of the assessment and analysis guide of McAfee and Leong (2002) for children, including empathy, affective perspective-taking, friendship, peer relations and social problem-solving skills. Additional characteristics were added in the Observer Behaviour Checklist to match with the educator's behaviour checklist and the lesson plans of the

workshop. The checklist subscales included: appropriate language and movement, being respectful towards objects and turn taking. In addition, the negative versions of these subscales were also included (e.g., inappropriate language and movement, not being respectful towards objects and not waiting for turn). Each subscale included a list of behaviours to be observed. The checklist was designed to observe the children's behaviour at three 10-minute time intervals: beginning, middle and end of the workshop. In this way, the observers could observe: (a) the beginning of the workshop, when children were engaged in story time as well as the feeling expression game; (b) the middle of the workshop, where children were engaged in group play; (c) at the end of the workshop, when children were engaged in physical activities. The checklist was in the form of a frequency-sampling observational measure, which gave the observers the opportunity to assess children's behaviour at different times of the workshop and during specific activities children were doing.

Researcher journal. To document my role as participant observer, I kept a journal during the workshop, to record my role during the activities, the children's reactions to them and any adaptations I made to the activities to accommodate the children's needs and interests.

Workshop plan. The 8 bi-weekly lesson plans (16 sessions) included themes such as expression of feelings, friendship, team-work, helpfulness, patience, kindness, trust and generosity (see Appendix J). I constructed the workshop activities, games, stories, role-plays and discussions based the literature on social skills programs and my past experiences working with children of this age.

Educator posters. Each week, a poster was prepared with the topic discussed during the workshop, where the afterschool program educators reminded the students of what they had learnt that specific week through stories and questions related to the stories (see Appendix K).

Educator evaluation form. At the end of the social skills program, educators were asked to complete a short evaluation form to evaluate the use of the poster activity in reinforcing children's weekly learnt social skills (see Appendix L).

Take home parent activity handout. At the end of each week's social skills workshop, children were given a take-home parent activity handout to give to their parents. These activities were designed to reinforce the weekly learnt themes in the home setting (see Appendix M).

Parent evaluation form. At the end of the social skills workshop sessions, parents were asked to complete a short evaluation form to describe if the take-home activities were beneficial to their children and if they enjoyed the activity, as well as if they would continue using such activities after the completion of the workshop (see Appendix N).

Child certificates. Certificates of participation were given to the children participating in the study after the final set of child interviews (see Appendix O).

Validity, reliability and rigor

Firstly, I would like to state that because I was very positive that children would benefit from this social skills workshop, I could be biased as to the results of child outcomes. Therefore, two observers, one of whom was blind to the study observed the children's behaviour throughout the workshop (4 sessions for the first observer and 3

sessions for the second observer). Also, after the workshop had been implemented, child interviews were conducted to examine children's perceptions of the social skills program. In addition, educator evaluation forms were used to ascertain whether the poster activity reminding children of the weekly social skills was effective. Moreover, parent evaluation forms were used to examine the parents' perceptions of the take-home parent activities of the weekly social skills themes and whether they were beneficial to their children.

Reliability was taken into consideration as the instruments used to examine children's perceptions of their behaviour, their affective perspective-taking ability and empathy skills all aimed to find out more about the child's behaviour and social interactions with others. Therefore, the approach of using alternate forms of measurement (i.e., interviews, vignettes and drawings) at the beginning and end of the study all provided different ways of assessing children's perceptions of their behaviour, their affective perspective-taking ability and empathy skills.

In addition, educator and observer checklists were used to describe children's behaviour in different situations, which again aimed at finding out more about the children's positive behaviour and social interaction. Here, the process of inter-rater reliability was used, where observations of behaviour were made with more than one individual to assess children's behaviour. In this way, bias was decreased, as 3 educators and 2 observers evaluated the same children's behaviour.

Content validity was also taken into consideration, as the instruments measured what they intended to measure to answer the research questions of the study. The first (before the intervention) and second (after the intervention) interviews were conducted to examine if there were any changes of behaviour in children due to their participation in

the workshop and what they learnt from the social skills program. In addition, the vignettes and drawings before and after the workshop conveyed children's change of perceptions of affective perspective-taking and empathy. Educator and observer reports also assessed children's behaviour in the workshop and classroom setting. Criterion-related validity and construct validity were also established in the study, as the interviews, vignettes and drawings were believed to be highly correlated with children's outcome behaviour. Also, a parent child questionnaire form was used to compare them with children's vignette answers to examine both parents' and children's perceptions of how they would react in the home and school settings. Furthermore, Educator and Observer Behaviour Checklists were used to assess children's behaviour which may be influenced by the workshop and were also compared to the child interviews that described children's perceptions of their behaviour.

With respect to the internal and external validity of the design, it was limited in different ways: for example, children's history, background, and status of their families were not taken into consideration in this study. One of the reasons I did not ask for demographic data or child school reports was because I wanted this workshop to be applicable to everybody, and not centered on a particular demographic. In this way, all children regardless of their background were given the opportunity to be exposed to the social skills program.

Also, maturation was another threat to internal validity as children could have been exposed to other social skill programs in the school. However, this was not seen as a negative aspect, as I wanted children who might have attended similar workshops to

freely express their ideas and share with the group what they have learned and to act as role models to other children.

From the 10 children intended for the study, one of the parents wished to withdraw their child from attending the workshop due to inconvenience of the time the workshop was conducted. Another issue that occurred was the fact that some children were not present at all of the workshop sessions (n=15). This was due to illnesses and absences from school as the workshop was held during the fall/winter season. During the workshop, the H1N1 flu was present and some children were absent from the school due to receiving the flu vaccine or due to the fear of being contaminated by other students.

Interaction of selection and maturation was not considered to be a disadvantage in this study, as children interacting with each other would be able to convey the prosocial behaviours to their peers and create a close bond with each other. With respect to external validity, this study did not intend to generalize its findings to the population, as it aimed to examine how this workshop program influenced the 9 children participating in it. As mentioned earlier, children could have been exposed to other forms of interventions or programs promoting prosocial behaviour; the researcher did not view that as an issue, as its goal was to examine whether children enjoyed this program and if they learned something from it.

Data Analysis

This was a mixed-methods exploratory design; therefore, the data were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. For the qualitative part, the interviews were entered onto an Excel sheet where the questions were broken down into codes and put together in themes to analyse the trends of children's responses to as how they perceived their

behaviours and what they learnt from the workshop (e.g., expression of feelings, friendship, team-work, helpfulness, patience, kindness, trust and generosity). Parents' and educators' evaluation forms addressed the effectiveness of the use of take-home parent activity handouts and poster activities to reinforce children's newly acquired skills. These were compared to children's interview responses of what they learnt from the workshop and if their behaviour was impacted by the social skills activities that they participated in. They were entered in spreadsheets and coded by comparing the similarities and differences in their responses.

Child vignettes about affective perspective-taking and empathy skills were also entered in excel sheets to compare the responses before and after the workshop. Scoring of the vignettes included the following: for the affective perspective-taking and empathy vignettes, before and after the workshop, 1 point was given to each correct answer and 0 for wrong answers. For the explanation of the empathy task of why the characters felt in a specific way, again 1 point was given for every correct answer and 0 for wrong answers. Also, children's drawings were linked to their responses during the vignettes and were analyzed to see if there were similarities or differences in what they saw and drew. Another point was granted if the drawing matched the feeling they label verbally. In addition, parents' child questionnaires were used to be compared to children's vignette responses to examine the differences or similarities of child behaviour and social interactions in the home and school setting. Scoring of the parent child questionnaire form included the following: one point was granted to the child if the parent chose a positive response for their child's behaviour to the hypothetical situation and 0 points if it was a negative response. The question about the parents' response was analyzed as part

of getting to know the children better from their first interview. In this way, not only would the children's behaviours and social interactions be described, but also the perceptions of the parents.

Concerning the quantitative data, the Observers' Behaviour Checklist data and Educator Behaviour Checklist data were entered in SPSS files and mean scores for each category were computed; these observations were used to complement the qualitative responses of the children concerning their behaviour and social interactions. T-tests were administered to examine the significant changes of children's behaviour in the workshop setting according to the observer reports. The Educators' Behaviour Checklists was grouped into composites of positive behaviour (i.e., child's individual behaviour) and social interaction (i.e., child's behaviour with peers) and t-tests were conducted to assess children's change of behaviour in the classroom setting.

Results

The results of the study are presented as follows. First, the quantitative analysis used to determine whether the social skills workshop increased children's prosocial behaviour will be presented. Second, both quantitative and qualitative analyses will be described to determine whether the social skills interventions increased children's use of affective perspective-taking and empathy skills. Third, qualitative data will be presented to describe children's understanding of social skills, as well as when they were asked to describe the workshop and what they learnt from the workshop. Finally, educators' and parents' perspectives of the workshop will be described.

Quantitative results

The first research question intended to find out whether the workshop had an influence on children's prosocial behaviour and included both positive behaviour and social interactions. For this analysis, quantitative results from the Educator Behaviour Checklist, as well as the Observer Behaviour Checklist for the 9 children were analyzed. Moreover, children's perceptions of their change of behaviour were also considered, to understand whether their perceptions were consistent with the educators' and observers' observations.

Educator Behavior Checklist

The Educator Behaviour Checklist was used by 3 educators to assess the children's behaviour, prior to, and following the workshop. Each educator used a likert rating scale to assess children's behaviours in two areas of prosocial behaviour: positive behaviour and social interaction. Children's positive behaviours included: appropriate language, ignoring distractions, participating in the lesson, playing appropriately with

objects, following teacher rules, accepting class rules, showing self-control, expressing feelings, and respecting others and property. Children's social interaction included behaviours such as: cooperating with peers, liking fair play, avoiding trouble (e.g., apologizing), waiting for turn, sharing with others, listening to others, helping others, joining in games/activities, and recognizing others' feelings.

Data analysis

The Educators' Behaviour Checklist data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16) software. Children's behaviours prior to and following the workshop sessions were examined. Frequency counts, mean and t-test analyses were computed to analyze the data.

Positive Behaviour

Overall mean scores and standard deviations for children's positive behaviour prior and following the workshop are depicted in Table 1. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the educators' rating of children's behaviour before (pre) and after (post) the eight week workshop sessions. There was a significant difference between the scores for positive behaviours prior to the workshop (M= 3.74, SD=.242) and following the workshop (M= 4.13, SD= .426); t(8)= -3.387, p<.05.

More specifically, significant changes were observed in children's use of appropriate language, t(8)= -2.828, p<.05; expression of feelings, t(8)= -5.292, p<.05; and respecting others and property , t(8)= -2.530, p<.05 (see Table 1). These results suggested that according to the educators, children's use of appropriate language, expression of feeling and respecting others and property were improved as a result of the workshop.

Social Interaction

Overall mean scores and standard deviations for children's social interaction

behaviours prior to and following the workshop are depicted in Table 1. A paired-

samples t-test was conducted to compare the educators' ratings of children's social

interaction before (pre) and after (post) the eight-week workshop sessions. There was a

significant difference between the scores for social interaction prior to the workshop (M=

3.66, SD=.142) and following the workshop (M= 3.96, SD=.182); t(8)= -5.989, p<.05.

More specifically, educators reported that children's recognition of feelings was

improved at follow up, t(8)= -2.530, p<.05 (see Table 1).

Table 1

Educator reports of children's behaviour in the classroom

Variable	Prior to Workshop		Following Workshop		T(8)	p	95% CL	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
Overall Positive Behaviours	3.74	.242	4.13	.426	-3.387	.010*	-.659	-.125
Appropriate language	3.78	.667	4.44	.882	-2.828	.022*	-1.210	-.123
Ignores distractions	3.22	.833	3.56	.726	-.894	.397	-1.193	.526
Participates in lesson	4.11	.928	4.67	.707	-1.644	.139	-1.335	.224
Plays approp. with objects	3.78	.972	4.11	.928	-2.000	.081	.051	-2.000
Follows Teacher rules	3.78	.667	4.22	.833	-1.512	.169	.233	-1.512
Accepts class rules	3.89	.928	4.33	.866	-1.512	.169	.233	-1.512
Shows self-control	3.78	.833	3.33	.707	-1.835	.104	1.003	1.835
Expresses feelings	3.56	.882	4.33	.866	-5.292	.001*	-.439	-5.292
Respect others/ Property	3.78	.833	4.22	.833	-2.530	.035*	-.039	-2.530
Overall Social Interactions	3.66	.142	3.96	.182	-.189	.000*	-.425	-.189
Cooperates with peers	3.78	.667	4.11	.928	-1.000	.347	-1.102	.435

(continued)

Likes fair play	3.67	.707	4.00	.866	-1.414	.195	.210	-1.414
Avoids trouble	3.67	.707	3.78	.833	-.555	.594	.351	-.555
Waits for turn	3.44	1.130	3.78	.833	-1.414	.195	.210	-1.414
Shares with others	3.78	.833	3.78	.972	.000	.100	-.544	.544
Listens to others	3.56	.882	3.89	.782	-1.155	.282	.332	-1.155
Helps others	3.56	.882	4.00	1.118	-1.180	.272	.424	-1.180
Joins in games	3.89	.601	4.33	1.000	-1.835	.104	.114	-1.835
Recognizes feelings	3.56	.882	4.00	.707	-2.530	.035*	-.850	-.039

Note. N = 9. CI = confidence interval; LL = Lower limit; UL = upper limit. *p<.05, two-tailed.

Observer Behaviour Checklist

The Observer Behaviour Checklist was completed on 4 different occasions by two observers who were blind to the study. The observations took place on weeks 2, 5, 7 and 8. The observation checklist was a frequency sampling measure that was used to record children's positive and negative behaviours in three 10-minute intervals during the 1-hour workshop. The observers recorded the children's group behaviours at the beginning, middle and end of the workshop sessions.

Inter-rater Reliability

Inter-rater agreement percentage reliability for the observers' checklist was 87%. In particular, agreement for children's positive behaviours was 90%; and 84% for the negative behaviours. Inter-rater reliability for appropriate language was 84%; and 82% for inappropriate language. For appropriate movement inter-reliability was 83%; and 80% for inappropriate behaviour. The behaviour of being gentle with objects scored 94%; and 87% for the behaviour of being violent with objects. Waiting for turn received 97%; and not waiting for turn received 86%. In general, results showed that both observers' recordings were similar and that they observed the same behaviour exhibited in the classroom setting.

Checklist subscales

The Observer Behaviour checklist consisted of four subscales of the positive behaviours, and four subscales of negative behaviours. The subscales of the positive behaviours included: (a) appropriate language, which was related to children's verbal behaviour when sharing ideas (e.g., child talks about personal stories or ideas), apologizing (e.g., child says sorry to others), complimenting others (e.g., child says

something nice and positive to others) or asking questions (e.g., child asks questions related to story or discussion); (b) appropriate movement, which was related to children's behaviours when giving (e.g., child passes object to others), sharing (e.g., child offers objects to others or puts object at proximity to others), helping (e.g., child offers physical or verbal assistance to others) or showing (e.g., child teaches/demonstrates how to do something); (c) gentle with objects, which was related to children's behaviour when playing respectfully (e.g., child handles object with care) or not being possessive with materials (e.g., child shares, offers, passes object with others); and (d) waiting for turn, which was related to children's behaviours when raising their hand and wait to be called (e.g., child waits for his turn to speak) or waiting for their turn in games (e.g., child waits for his turn to play). The negative behaviours subscales included: (a) inappropriate language, which was related to children's behaviours when using foul language (e.g., child swears, teases or uses a negative tone when speaking), shouting (e.g., child uses loud voice towards others) or not answering to others or to questions (e.g., child ignores teacher's or other children's questions or requests); (b) inappropriate movement, which was related to children's behaviour when hitting (e.g., child uses negative physical contact with others by hurting them), pushing (e.g., child uses negative physical contact with others by physically pushing) or pulling (e.g., child uses negative physical contact with others by physically pulling); (c) violent with objects, which was related to children's behaviour when throwing (e.g., child throws object at a distance), pulling (e.g., child uses negative physical contact with objects by physically pulling), pushing (e.g., child uses negative physical contact with objects by physically pushing), or breaking materials (e.g., child uses negative physical contact with objects by putting force to

damage or destroy object); and (d) not waiting for turn, which was related to children's behaviours when calling out without raising hand or while raising hand (e.g., child being impatient verbally), interrupting others when talking (e.g., child verbally stops others from talking), or pushing to get a turn (e.g., child being impatient physically).

Data analysis

The Observer Behaviour Checklist data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16) software, to examine children's behaviours from the beginning to the end of the workshop, as well as to show how their behaviour changed throughout the sessions (i.e., beginning, middle and end of each workshop session). Means were compared using paired-sample t-tests.

Positive and Negative Behaviours across the workshop sessions

Table 2 displays the observers' ratings of children's positive and negative behaviours in the first and fourth observations of the workshop sessions. Results revealed that there were no significant changes in almost all of the children's positive and negative behaviours across the 4 workshop sessions. There was an exception of the observations of children's behaviours in week 7 and 8 (week 3 and 4 of observation), where there was a significant decrease in children's turn-taking behaviour in week 8 (M= 6.33, SD=2.887) from week 7 (M=2.00, SD=1.732); t(2)= 6.500, p<.05 (see Table 3). Week 8 observations may serve as follow-up observation because they were conducted after a 3-week period.

Table 2

Observation of children's behaviour during the workshop

Variable	Observation 1		Observation 4		T(3)	p	95% CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
Positive Behaviours	18.50	10.90	11.75	11.442	.621	.579	-27.854	41.354
Appropriate language	4.33	3.05	3.67	3.786	.286	.802	-9.373	10.706
Appropriate movement	10.67	6.429	.67	1.155	2.402	.138	-7.913	27.913
Gentle with objects	2.33	4.041	9.33	2.517	-1.941	.192	-22.513	8.513
Wait for turn	7.33	5.508	2.00	1.732	2.440	.135	-4.071	14.738
Negative Behaviours	10.75	8.421	10.75	4.113	.000	1.000	-7.903	7.903
Inappropriate language	2.33	3.215	2.33	2.082	.000	1.000	-8.957	8.957
Inappropriate movement	3.00	4.359	4.00	5.196	-1.732	.225	-3.484	1.484
Violent with objects	1.33	1.155	2.67	2.517	-.658	.578	-10.057	7.391
Not wait for turn	7.67	2.517	5.33	4.509	.690	.562	-12.222	16.889

Note. N = 9. CI = Confidence interval; LL = Lower limit; UL = upper limit. *p<.05, two-tailed.

Table 3

Observation of children's behaviour during the last two workshop sessions

Variable	Observation 3		Observation 4		T(2)	p	95% CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
Appropriate language	6.33	7.506	3.67	3.786	1.220	.347	-6.738	12.071
Appropriate movement	.33	.577	.67	1.155	-.378	.742	-4.128	3.461
Gentle with objects	6.33	3.055	9.33	2.517	-1.000	.423	-15.908	9.908
Wait for turn	6.33	2.887	2.00	1.732	6.500	.023*	1.465	7.202
Inappropriate language	1.67	1.528	2.33	2.082	-.378	.742	-8.2556	6.923
Inappropriate movement	6.00	1.732	4.00	5.196	.555	.635	-13.513	17.513
Violent with objects	.67	.577	2.67	2.517	-1.732	.225	-6.968	2.968
Not wait for turn	4.67	4.509	5.33	4.509	-.756	.529	-4.461	3.128

Note. N = 9. CI = Confidence interval; LL = Lower limit; UL = upper limit. *p<.05, two-tailed.

Positive and negative behaviours within the workshop session

Moreover, children's behaviours throughout the 4 weeks of observation at the beginning, middle and end of each workshop session were assessed to examine if there were any significant changes in their behaviours within each workshop session. In particular, results showed significant differences in children's positive behaviours between the beginning of the workshop session (M=28.50, SD=7.550) and the end of the workshop session (M=13.25, SD=4.573); t(3)= 4.551, p<.05 (see Table 4). In addition, significant differences were observed between children's negative behaviours at the beginning of the workshop sessions (M=12.00, SD=2.582), when compared to children's positive behaviours at the beginning of the workshop sessions (M=28.50, SD=7.550); t(3)= 4.551, p<.05). Therefore, children seemed to exhibit more positive than negative behaviours at the beginning of the workshop sessions.

Table 4

Observation of children's behaviour at the beginning and end of the workshop sessions

Variable	Beginning		End		T(3)	p	95% CL	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
Positive-positive	28.50	7.550	13.25	4.573	4.551	.020*	4.586	4.586
Negative-negative	12.00	2.582	20.50	7.937	-1.686	.190	-24.544	-24.544

Note. N = 9. CI = Confidence interval; LL = Lower limit; UL = upper limit. *p<.05, two-tailed.

Children's perspectives on prosocial behaviour

Children's perspectives regarding their change of behaviour were obtained through one of the questions in the child interviews prior to and following the workshop, when children were asked whether they argued with their friends. Children's responses are displayed in Table 5. Prior to the workshop, 5 children responded that they did not argue with their friends and 4 children replied that they argued (e.g., "Yes, I do cos when we're playing sometimes when they want a hat, I say no, then we fight because of anger"). However, when they were asked if they argued with their friends following the workshop, 7 children replied that they did not argue and only 2 children responded that they sometimes argued (e.g., "Some of them, because they weren't being nice to me").

Table 5

Children's responses to arguing with peers

Child	Prior to the Workshop	Following the Workshop
1	No, cos most of my friends before I played with them, I said do you want to be my friend, instead of lets go play-I like to get to know them	Nope
2	Yeah, cos sometimes when we go in line, I go back to my line and then we have a little fight	No, you never saw us argue
3	No, cos they never hit me. One time, M grabbed me and pushed me on the floor. Ii hit him on the tummy cos he wasn't playing. He was telling me go away J.	No
4	Yes, sometimes, cos sometimes I'm right or my friends are right or something I'm right with chess and sometimes my friends cheat when they play checkers	No
5	No, cos they never ask me to argue and we never do. We can't really argue, co the teacher can catch us.	Nope
6	Yeah, can't remember	No
7	No, because they're really nice to me and I like to be nice to them	No
8	Just a little bit, cos they sometimes, I don't know, when they run do not something fun to me, they say they can't	Sometimes
9	Yes, I do cos when we're playing sometimes when they want a hat, I say no, then we fight cos of anger	Some of them, cos they weren't being nice to me

Note. Participants were asked, "Do you argue with your friends?" Children responded to

the same question before and after the workshop.

Quantitative and qualitative results

The second research question focused on whether the social skills workshop influenced children's understanding of affective perspective-taking and empathy through their responses to questions on vignettes, depicting perspective-taking abilities and empathy skills. Children were given short vignettes on both affective perspective-taking as well as empathy skills before and after the workshop to view their responses on the vignettes. The vignettes were scored both qualitatively as well as quantitatively as children were asked to choose from 4 different facial expressions to match sentences in some vignettes, as well as to describe reasons for their answers in other vignettes. The qualitative and quantitative sections of the vignettes were entered in tables created in Microsoft Word documents; and the quantitative parts of the vignettes were scored according to Denham's (1986) scoring scheme. Variation of the vignettes' scoring is further discussed in the discussion section.

Children's understanding of affective perspective-taking

Results showed that children's responses to affective perspective-taking tasks and empathy response tasks increased at follow up, after the completion of the workshop. Prior to the workshop, the first affective perspective-taking task focused on children's recognition of the story character's four different feelings (i.e., happy, sad, angry, scared) in four different situations (i.e., the story character sees a dog and reacts differently). Two of the nine children recognized all four feelings of the story character. Five of the 9 children recognized the three feelings; whereas, one child recognized 2 of the feelings and one child only 1. Results were not related to age or gender. Following the workshop, a similar task was administered to the children with a different story (i.e., the

story character goes to the doctor to take a shot and reacts differently); the results changed as 7 of the children recognized the story character's four different feelings and 2 children recognized only three of the feelings. Results were not related to age or gender. Results were not due to test-retest as different stories were told to the children and there was a gap of a 9 week period between the pre- and post-testing of the affective perspective-taking and empathy tasks.

The second part of the affective perspective-taking vignette examined children's abilities to understand how their best friend and they would feel in 4 different situations (happy-happy, happy-sad, sad-happy, sad-sad). Prior to the workshop, children were given 4 scenarios which required 4 different answers (i.e., (a) you and [your best friend] are coloring pictures together and your teacher comes over to tell you what a good job you are both doing (happy-happy); (b) when you are out on the playground, everyone wants to play with you and no one wants to play with [your best friend] (happy-sad); (c) you and [your best friend] are playing with your toys and someone walks by and steps on them. Your favorite toy gets broken, but all of [your best friend's] toys are okay (sad-happy); and (d) the teacher yells at you and [your best friend] for not being quiet while she reads the class a story (sad-sad)). Two of the 9 children responded correctly in all 4 scenarios and scored one point each, according to the scoring of the vignette. However, the remaining 7 scored 3 out of the 4 correct responses. For instance, in the following scenario: "When you are out in the playground, everyone wants to play with you and no one wants to play with [your best friend]. How do you feel? How does [your best friend] feel?"; seven children responded that they would feel sad because no one wanted to play with their friend. Interestingly, one of 7 children changed the scenario to a 'sad-happy'

situation as he responded that he would feel sad for his best friend and that would make his best friend happy. Moreover, results from the follow up interview of the affective perspective vignettes showed an increase in children's responses on affective perspective tasks. The vignettes following the workshop had a similar structure as the vignettes prior to the workshop, but included different hypothetical situations (answers (i.e., (a) you and [your best friend] ask the teacher if you can go play on the playground. She lets you both go play on the playground (happy-happy); (b) you and [your best friend] make houses out of blocks and then leave to get some more blocks. When you come back, your house is still there, but someone has knocked down [your best friend's] house (happy-sad); (c) you and [your best friend] go to the toy store together and each of you finds a different toy that you want. You do not get to buy a toy, but [your best friend] gets to buy the toy that he/she wanted (sad-happy); and (d) you and [your best friend] want to go outside and play a game together, but it starts to rain and you both have to stay inside all day (sad-sad)). Eight children perceived the 'happy-sad' situation as a 'sad-sad' situation. For example, in the scenario: "You both make houses out of the blocks and leave them to get some more blocks. When you come back your house is still there, but someone has knocked over [your best friend's] house. How do you feel? How does [your best friend feel?]"; eight children responded that they would feel sad if their friend's house was broken. Results following the workshop also revealed that children not only felt sad if their friend felt sad, but that their friend also felt sad when they felt sad. In the follow up session of the affective perspective-taking vignette, 7 children perceived the 'sad-happy' situation as either a 'sad-sad' (n=4) or 'happy-happy' (n=3) situation. For example, in the scenario: "You and [your best friend] go to the toy store and each one of you finds a

different toy that you like. You do not get to but a toy, but [your best friend] gets to but the toy s/he wanted. How do you feel? How does [your best friend] feel?; the children who viewed it as a positive situation (happy-happy) responded that their best friend would share the toy with them; or they were happy for their friend who got a new toy; whereas, the children who viewed it as a negative situation (sad-sad) responded that their friend would be sad for them because they did not get to buy a toy.

Child interviews prior to the workshop showed the different levels of affective perspective-taking in their peer and family interactions. Table 6 illustrates children's understanding of their peers' feelings in sad, angry and happy situations. When children were asked how they would know when their friend was feeling sad, 4 children responded when s/he is "crying". Two children mentioned that their friend would make a different facial expression (e.g., "I can see the face look weird"; "they make a sad face") and the remaining 5 children did not give direct answers as to how they would know when their friend was feeling sad, but what they would do, if their friend was feeling sad (e.g., "I go tell the teacher our friend is really sad or hurt"; "I show them to get happier, I ask them to play together"). Regarding the angry feelings of friends, 2 children recognized how their friend would feel if s/he was angry (e.g., "I can tell, some stump their feet/cross their arms, tell teacher"; "frown"); yet 2 children gave a more general reply of how they would know their friend was feeling angry (e.g., "Make an angry face"; "hear him, look his face, I will say"). However, the other 5 gave different responses. Three of these five children mentioned why their friend would feel angry (e.g., "If someone hurts them"; "if somebody pushed, hurt or scared him"; "when not like what they're doing in game they say 'I quit'"); whereas 1 child mentioned what she would do if

her friend was feeling angry (e.g., "Have to find the person who's not being polite").

Nevertheless, there was 1 child who replied "They never get angry" which could also

mean that he could not recognize his friends' angry facial expressions. When children

were asked how they would know their friends(without naming any specific friends) were

feeling happy, only 2 children responded with the words "laughing" and "smiling", and 1

child mimicked a smiling behaviour (e.g., "When they go like this" (smiles)). Two

children mentioned that their friend would feel happy when s/he plays with them or with

another friend (e.g., "When they play with me"; "when somebody plays with them").

Three children however did not seem to know when their friend was feeling happy (e.g.,

"I don't know"; "they just have to tell me"; "-"). One of the children described how his

dogs would feel when they would be happy instead of describing his friends' actions

(e.g., "When they see me, they go like crazy with happiness").

Table 6

Children's responses to friends' various situations

Child	Sad	Angry	Happy
1	"Usually when somebody is crying and not playing, I say hey, why are you crying?"	"When not like what they're doing in game they say 'I quit'"	"Playing with somebody, or laughing when someone is saying jokes"
2	"I see him. I say what happened? I go tell teacher the truth really quickly"	"If somebody pushed, hurt or scared him"	"Well, when they see me they go like crazy with happiness" (dogs)
3	"Cos I can see the face look weird"	"They never get angry"	"When they go like this (smiles)"
4	"See them crying, I tell the teacher"	"Hear him, look his face, I will say"	"When they play with me"
5	"They cry or have a frown. I tell teacher"	"I can tell, some stump their feet/cross their arms, tell teacher"	"-"
6	"They make a sad face"	"Make an angry face"	"Smiling"
7	"I stop them from crying, to have fun"	"Have to find the person who's not being polite"	"They just have to tell me"
8	"I go tell the teacher our friend is really sad or hurt"	"If someone hurts them"	"When somebody plays with them"
9	"I show them to get happier, I ask them to play together	"Frown (clown fish) I tell the teacher"	"I don't know"

Note. Participants were asked, "How do you know when your friend is sad; angry; happy? What do you do about it?" Children responded to the question prior to the workshop

Table 7

Children's responses to parents' reaction

Child	Parents' reaction
1	"They feel sort of angry that we were arguing-if we stop-they'll be happy"
2	"They say 'what happened' and then I would start to tell"
3	"They would give me one more chance"
4	"A little bit mad"
5	"My dad would feel angry and my mum would feel very mad"
6	"Worried"
7	"They would feel sad"
8	"She usually feels like sad"
9	"She feels crazy"

Note. Participants were asked, "How your parents feel when they see you arguing with your friend or brother/sister?" Children responded to the question before the workshop.

Table 7 illustrates children's responses to affective perspective-taking scenarios in response to family interactions (i.e., when the parent finds their child arguing with a sibling or peer). Results showed that 7 children were able to recognize how their parents would feel if they saw them arguing with someone (e.g., "They feel sort of angry that we were arguing-if we stop-they'll be happy", "a little bit mad"; "my dad would feel angry and my mum would feel very mad"; "worried"; "they would feel sad"; "she usually feels like sad"; "she feels crazy"). However, 2 children did not mention their parents' feelings, but mostly their interaction with them after witnessing the argument (e.g., "They say 'what happened' and then I would start to tell"; "They would give me one more chance").

Children's affective perspective-taking was also measured by their drawings. Prior to the workshop, children were asked to draw how they would feel if a child in their class had a birthday party, invited everyone but them; and following the workshop, children were asked to draw how they would feel if they were playing with a toy and someone took it away from them. Results showed that prior to the workshop, 2 children mislabeled their facial expression (happy instead of sad) (see Figures 1 and 2); and 1 child first drew himself as feeling happy, then asked to draw another picture and drew himself feeling sad. However, all children's drawings following the workshop were correctly labeled as 'sad'. Therefore, children's understanding of illustrating a child feeling sad in the drawings before and after the workshop seemed to change. Prior to the workshop, only three 6- year- olds drew themselves as 'sad' and included other characters feeling 'happy' to show the contrast of feelings in those who were invited to the party and themselves who were not. However, following the workshop, 2, 5- year-old and three, 6-year-old children drew themselves as 'sad' and included other characters

feeling happy or angry for taking their toy away from them. Figure 3 illustrates how a kindergarten student uses mixed emotions in a given hypothetical situation following the workshop, in contrast to prior to the workshop, where he was only able to label one type of facial emotion (i.e., sad).

PRE-TEST:

POST-TEST:

Figure 1. Drawing example 1. Children's drawing, indicating a change of ability to label a sad facial expression in a sad situation.

PRE-TEST:

POST-TEST:

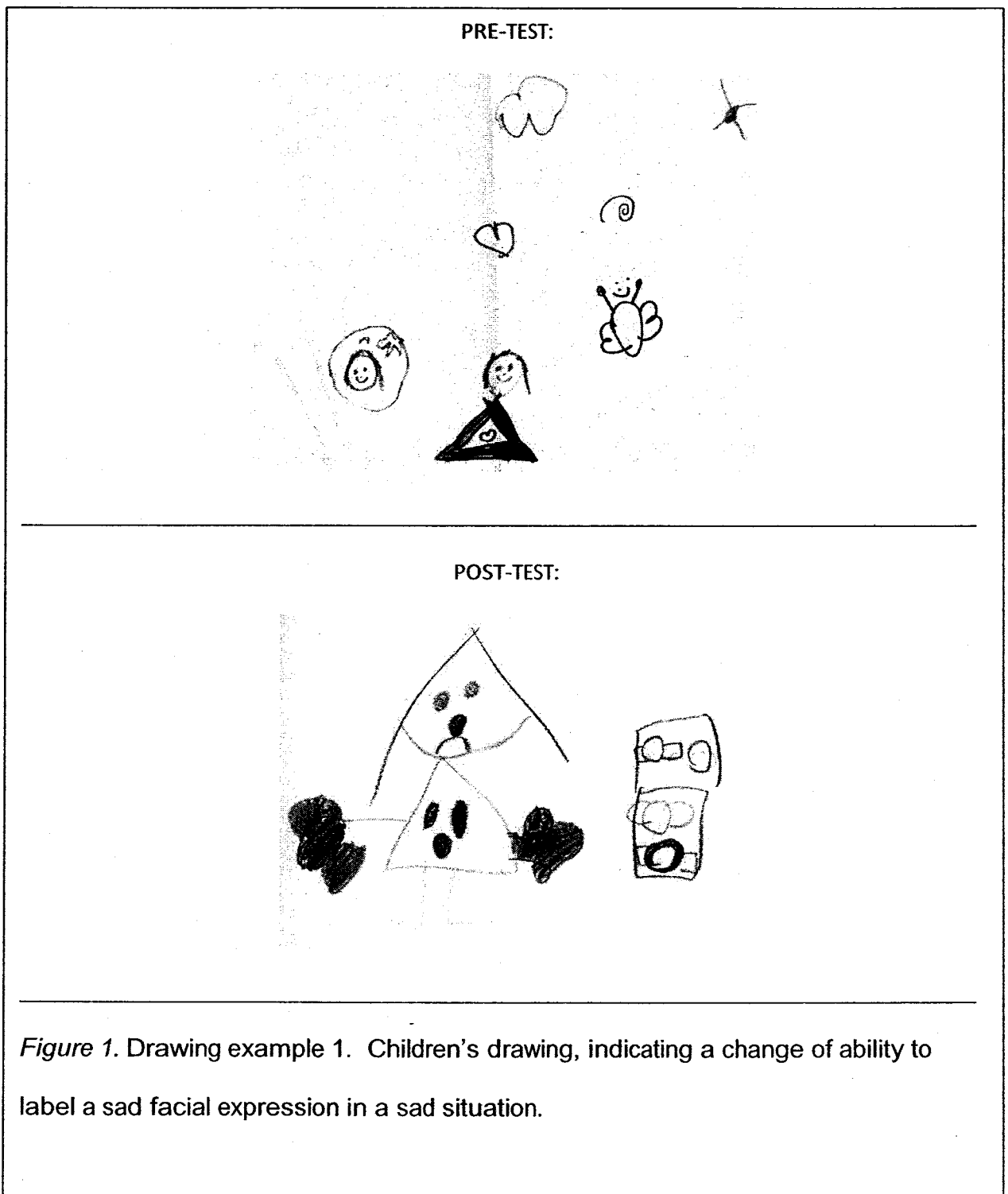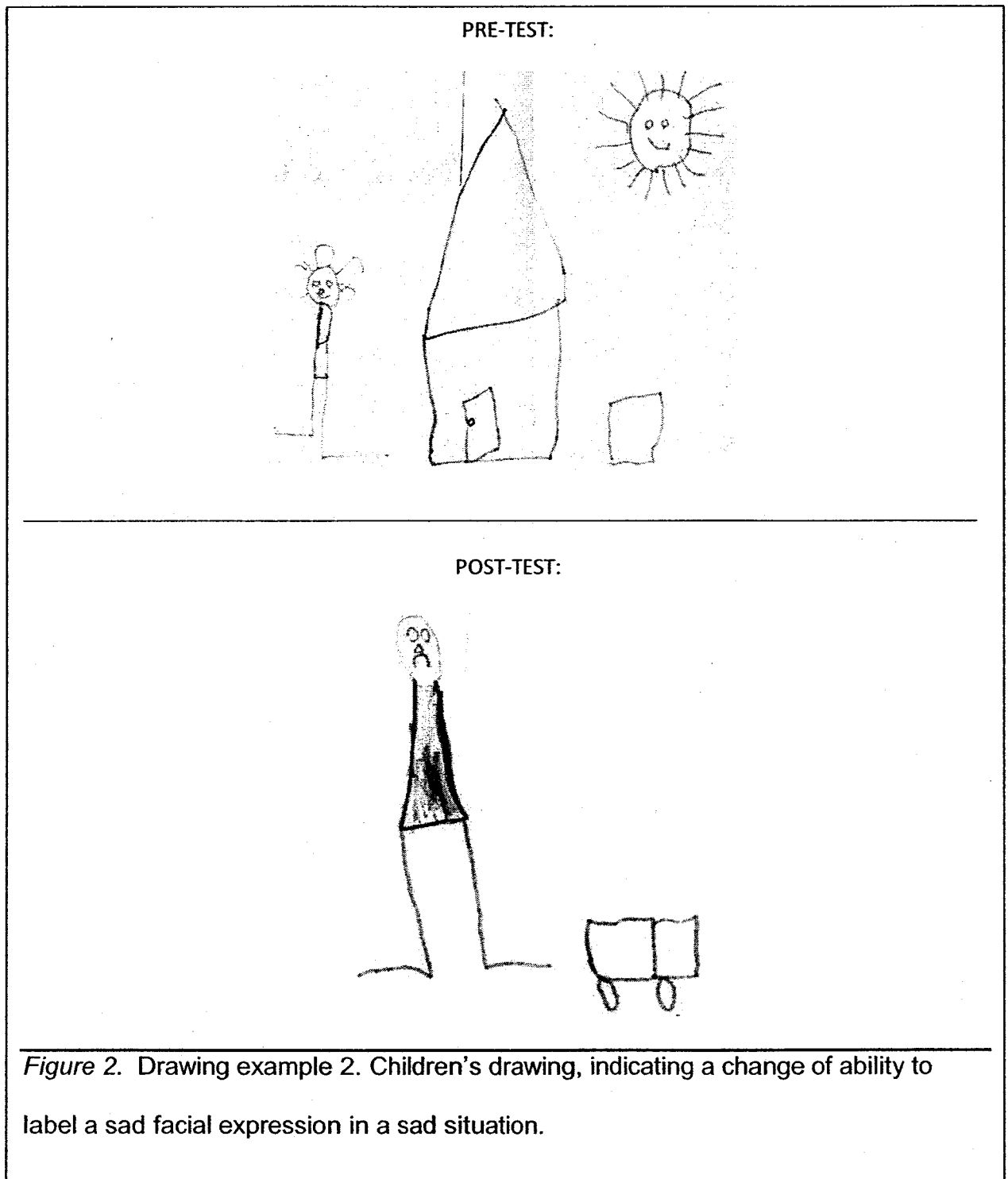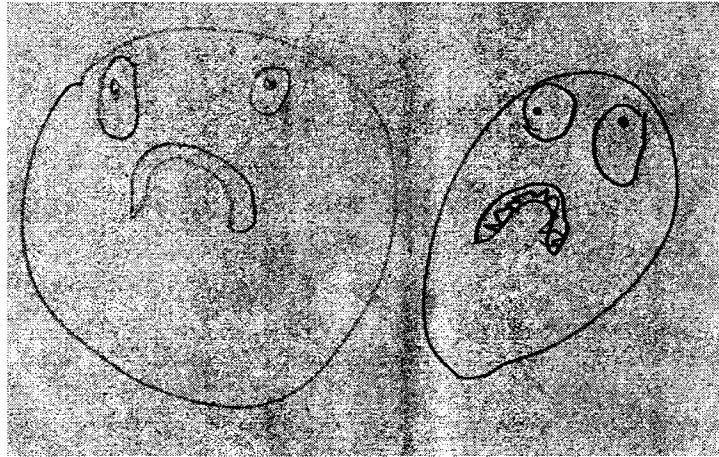*Figure 2.* Drawing example 2. Children's drawing, indicating a change of ability to

label a sad facial expression in a sad situation.
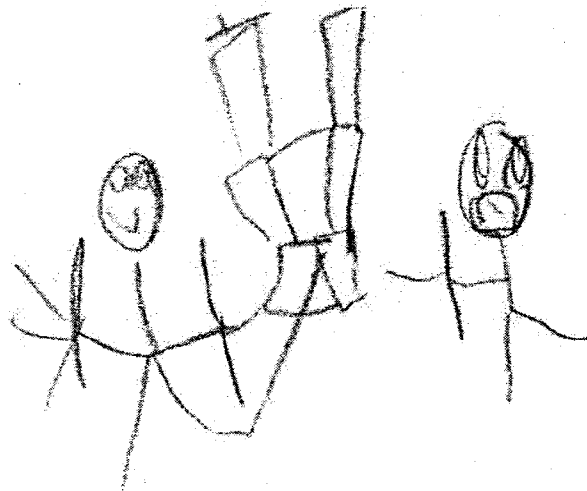
PRE-TEST:

POST-TEST:

Figure 3. Drawing example 3. Children's drawing, indicating the ability to depict mixed

emotions in the same situation.

Children's understanding of empathy

In Table 7, children's responses to empathy type scenarios depicting their friends as angry or sad, showed 4 children responding that they would tell the teacher that their friend is feeling sad or angry; and 3 children personally tried to help them either by asking them what happened or by playing with them to change their mood (e.g., , "I say hey, why are you crying?"; "I stop them from crying, to have fun"; "I show them to get happier, I ask them to play together"). Moreover, children's understanding of empathy was also measured at the beginning of the study in their interviews, when they were asked whether they had done something nice to their family or friend. The children's responses are illustrated on Table 8. Most of the children showed that they had empathy towards their peers (e.g., "I do funny things to make them laugh when they cry"; "helped them out when they're hurt"; "I had a skateboard, one of my friends wanted to try but didn't have one, I let him try mine"). Furthermore, children also responded with empathy on vignettes related to siblings and parents (e.g., "When little brother crying, I run to the room and give him stuff"; "when she was sick, I helped her"; "when they fall down, I pick them up"). However, there were 2 children who did not remember a story when they did something nice to someone, and 2 who said that they did not do anything nice to them. There were also some children who gave examples of how they help in house chores which they considered as doing something nice for their parents (e.g., "I help my mum making dinner and dad wash table"; "when my mummy says time to tidy up, I tidy up my room straight away").

Children's responses to the interviews showed that they were empathic before the workshop. However, children's responses to the empathy vignettes prior to workshop

varied. Two sections of empathy vignettes were given to children prior to and following the workshop. The first section of the empathy vignette referred to a boy/girl (Eric/Emma) who organized a birthday party, invited everyone in his/her class, except one child (William/Wendy). Children were asked how that child (William/Wendy) felt and how they felt for that child and why. Results revealed that all 9 children recognized that the child felt 'sad' for not being invited to the party and 8 of the 9 children felt sad for that child. However, 1 child said that she felt happy as she "didn't want to go" to the party; yet another child said that he felt sad and angry that he "didn't invite" the child (William/Wendy) to his party. These 2 examples illustrate how these children were personalizing the story and including themselves in the hypothetical story. Furthermore, 1 child mentioned a reason why Emma/Eric did not want to invite Wendy/William to his/her party (e.g., "the kid who's having a Birthday party, he doesn't want him to go because he wants to pop the balloons and throw the table"). This conveys how the child was trying to justify why Emma/Eric was not invited to the party and everyone else was invited.

Table 8

Children's responses to doing something nice

Child	Friend	Family
1	I was pushing car up, it slipped, I ran down to catch his car, he was crying-then laughing	Siblings: When little brother crying, I run to the room and give him stuff Parents: When dad was cutting the apple pie, he cut his finger- and asked me "could you get the band aid?", I did and gave to mum to put on
2	I do funny things to make them laugh when they cry	Parents: I don't hit them, I do something nice, I play with something, lego with them and make them happy
3	I play with them a lot	Siblings: Share cars with them that fairy gives under my pillow. Parents: I made family pictures
4	I don't remember	Siblings: I already did something, but I don't remember Parents: I help my Mum making dinner and Dad wash table
5	The nicest thing when I asked to play Winks Club	Parents: When my Mommy says time to tidy up, I tidy up my room straight away
6	No	Siblings: Yeah, but I don't remember Parents: Yeah, hug them
7	One day in school, we had a magic soap and I helped put it on someone who did not know how to	Parents: One day it was my Dad's birthday, so I made him a card
8	Helped them out when they're hurt	Siblings: When they fall down, I pick them up Parents: Yeah, when she was sick, I helped her
9	I had a skateboard, one of my friends wanted to try but didn't have one, I let him try mine	Siblings: I always try to give my brother stuff Parents: No

Note. Participants were asked "tell me a story when you did something nice to your friend; brother/sister; parents?" Children responded to the question before the workshop.

The second part of the vignette referred to Eric/Emma's birthday party being cancelled due to a storm and children were asked how they thought Eric/Emma felt and how they felt for Eric/Emma and why. Results showed that all 9 children recognized that Eric/Emma would feel sad for not having their birthday party, and 8 out of the 9 children felt sad for Eric/Emma. One child felt angry at the story character as "he didn't invite him [me] to his party". Two children personalized the story as 1 child said that she felt sad that she would not be able to attend the party (e.g., "Sad, cos she doesn't get to go and I don't get to go"), and another child said "Sad, cos nobody could come to his birthday, once it happened to me". This conveys that some of the children's answers as to how they felt about the character of the story could be influenced by their prior experiences. Two children added some details to the story such as, stating how excited Emma/Eric was for the party and that s/he wanted to have the party, and that s/he was sad because s/he would not "get food and bouncing castle".

Following the workshop, another vignette was told to the children, again divided into two parts. The first one referred to John/Jenny playing with dolls/blocks; until Jack/Jill comes and takes away the toys from John/Jenny. The children were asked how they thought John/Jenny felt and how they felt for John/Jenny and why. All nine children responded that the character of the story felt 'sad' and 8 children stated that they felt sad for the story character. One child replied that he felt happy for John when his blocks were taken away by Jack because "I [he] can help him get more blocks and make a real castle for him". This shows that this child could have related to the theme of "helpfulness" that was included in the workshop sessions. Another child stated that she felt sad for Jenny, "because I [she] care[d] about other people's feelings". Again this

shows that the child perhaps benefited from the workshop especially from the theme of "kindness" as she seemed to care for others. Other children's answers that showed they may have benefited from the workshop in increasing their responses to the empathy vignettes, were when the children mentioned sharing and waiting for turn (e.g., "He doesn't like it that boy stole from him and not share with him. He should wait for his turn"; "Jack took away the toys-should share"). Moreover, the second part of the story referred to the teacher seeing what Jack/Jill did and took away the toy from him/her. When children were asked how the character of the story felt, 8 children mentioned that s/he felt sad, yet one child mentioned that s/he felt angry. Some of the children's responses also included sharing and waiting for turn (e.g., "Sad, because he has no blocks, he should have waited for his turn. I always wait for my turn"; "sad, because he could have shared and played together". Children also mentioned words such as "stole" and "grabbed" to show that what Jack/Jill did was wrong and was considered a negative behaviour. The theme on fairness was observed as when children were asked on how they felt for the story character, 2 children replied that they felt happy that the teacher took the toy away from Jill (e.g., "Happy, because she just took it from the other girl. That's why I feel happy"; "happy, because Jenny would get her toy back"); whereas 6 children replied that they felt sad and one child felt angry as he thought that what the teacher did was also wrong, as she did exactly what Jack/Jill did to John/Jenny (e.g., "Angry, because the teacher took the toys away. What a mean teacher"). Four children added to the story by saying that when the teacher took away the toys from Jack/Jill, she gave the toys back to John/Jenny, suggesting that the teacher would do the right thing.

Qualitative Results

Children's understanding of social skills

The third research question intended to find out how the children who participated in the social skills workshop understood social skills and whether their views of social skills changed as a result of the intervention. Results from child interviews following the workshop showed that children's perceptions of social skills changed. More specifically, all nine children replied that they would use their learnt social skills with their friends and siblings. Six children mentioned that they will 'share' with their friends or siblings (e.g., "Yeap, sharing because I share a lot of my toys with my brother"); 3 children mentioned that they will be generous when sharing their toys (e.g., Yes, Andrew (pseudonym) gave me his Panda bear and I gave mine to my brother, now, I will share my things); 4 children mentioned that they will be nice to their peers and siblings (e.g., "Don't hit, always be nice and to play with people"; "Yeah, because if they are nice to me I'll be nice to them, sometimes I make pictures to my friends that they really like and I give them to keep forever"; "be nice and play with others"); 1 child mentioned helping others (e.g., "I'll try to do them, like helping people"); 1 child mentioned team-work (e.g., "I'll play in groups and teams"); and another child mentioned caring for others (e.g., "yeap, all the things that we learnt such as caring for others"). Also when children were asked which games they enjoyed playing the most at the workshop, children remembered some of the games and the themes related to the game (e.g., "the hot potato-helping friends"; "the mouse game, it was about friendship and we were trying to help the mouse so the cat wouldn't eat it"; "when we had to change the hat and be patient for our turn"; "tap hands and run and wait

for your turn,"; "I also liked the hockey game because it was not about losing or winning but just to having fun"; "helping the family").

When children were asked what they learnt from the workshop, all 9 children gave a list of values that they learned associated with the social skill themes (see Table 9). They mentioned values such as: Patience, kindness, helpfulness, generosity, trust, team-work, being nice, sharing, caring and thoughtful, and not hurting another person's feelings. All these values are clearly related to the themes discussed during the 8-week workshop sessions. The values of patience and generosity were mentioned by children the most perhaps due to the fact that that they were reinforced to children towards the end of the workshop (e.g., in week 8, children were introduced to the theme of generosity, but during the activities children were also reinforced to take turns as part of an activity where they were passing food to a poor family).

Table 9

Children's understanding of the workshop values

Child	Learnt values
1	Mm, that if you see someone drop something, you should bring it back to them, you shouldn't just leave it there. Sharing with others, I'm really patient with my brother, I really use the team-work with my friends
2	Sharing, playing and being nice and when we did story about sharing and kindness and waiting and being patient, that's it.
3	Being generous, being kind, thoughtful, sharing, trust others
4	Being generous, sharing things-my toys, helping each other, being kind and caring and being patient
5	Being patient is good, helping others, friendship, sharing, being generous, being kind and trust friends
6	To share things, learnt to be patient, care and be nice to others
7	Being nice, sharing, not to steal, to trust others, if you see sometimes a purse or money, you have to give it back to them, to try your best to help others
8	Being nice to everybody, don't hit, let people play games, when the let you, you let them too. I learnt to be generous and patient, don't hurt others' feelings
9	Sharing, being nice to each other and if you do something bad-say sorry, being generous, trusting other people and keeping secrets

Note. Participants were asked "What did you learn from the workshop?" Children

responded to the question after the workshop.

In addition, responses to the child vignettes following the workshop showed that children's understanding of social skills had expanded as they were able to include the skills in the short vignettes that they were told (e.g., "I care about people's feelings"; "he should wait for his turn"; "Jack took away the toys-should share"; "sad, because he has no blocks, he should have waited for his turn, I always wait for my turn"; "sad, because he could have shared and played together") which were not apparent in their responses in similarly structured vignettes prior to the workshop. The children's responses given, showed that they could apply these themes to actual social situations in their daily life.

Parents' and Educators' perspectives on the workshop

Parents' and educators' perspectives regarding the workshop were also taken into consideration in the study as we wanted to know if children were being reinforced the weekly learnt themes of the workshop, in the classroom and home settings. Both parents and educators were asked to share their opinion about the weekly activities.

Parents' Perspectives

During the workshop sessions, take-home activity handouts were given to children to complete in their home setting with either of their parents. In this activity, parents were asked to read the weekly theme story to their children; and the children were asked to draw what came to their mind when they read the story. Figures 4-6 illustrate some of the children's drawings in the home setting and their caption of the theme of the story. The child drawings revealed that the children put in time and energy to complete them. At the end of the workshop, parents were given evaluation forms to give their opinions regarding the take home handout. Five out of the 9 parents returned the forms and stated that their children enjoyed participating in the activities, the activities were

similar to what they encouraged at home and they would continue using such activities in their home setting. However, the parents did not find any change of behaviour in their children when doing the activities with them. Two parents also added that their children benefited from the workshop (e.g., "he has made great progress with sharing"). When children were asked if they enjoyed the take-home activity handout, 6 children replied that they enjoyed them (e.g., "yeah, because we got to colour"; "it was fun"; "yeah, they told me the story") and 3 mentioned that they did not have time to do them (e.g., "I didn't really have time"; "I kept losing them"). Even though the children who did the take-home activity with their parents seemed to enjoy them, it seemed that some children did not have the opportunity to do the activity in their home setting.

TAKE HOME PARENT ACTIVITY HANDOUT

After reading the below story to your child, ask your child to draw what comes to his/her mind when listening to the story. In this way children will conceptualize the story and internalize the values learnt from the story.

WEEK 2: Friendship:

- Story about friendship: "The friendless dog". A dog is newly adopted by a family and he wants to make friends with the neighbours' cat, hamster and bird. But none of them want to be his friend and they ignore him and won't play with him. One day, they find an old boat and decide to go on a ride in the river, but they later see that there is a hole in the boat and they start sinking, the birds wings become wet and cant' fly and the cat and hamster can't swim. The dog sees what is happening and gets a branch in his mouth and swims to rescue them. He gives the branch to them to hold on to and he takes them to the shore. The bird, cat and hamster are grateful to the dog for saving their life and say to him "A friend in need is a friend indeed, you were there for us when we needed you and this is what real friends are for. We would love you to be our new friend".

Figure 4. Drawing example 4. Children's drawing, indicating their understanding of the story theme.

TAKE HOME PARENT ACTIVITY HANDOUT

After reading the below story to your child, ask your child to draw what comes to his/her mind when listening to the story. In this way children will conceptualize the story and internalize the values learnt from the story.

WEEK 4: Helpfulness:

- Story about helping others: "Animals in a shelter". A shelter advertizes that they have free dogs; the children go to the shelter and choose a dog each. After they bring them home, they decide to have a party for them and they each buy a gift for their new dogs. Ask children what they decide to buy as a gift and why. They learn about helping others and wanting to make them happy. They also learn to love others and be kind to them.
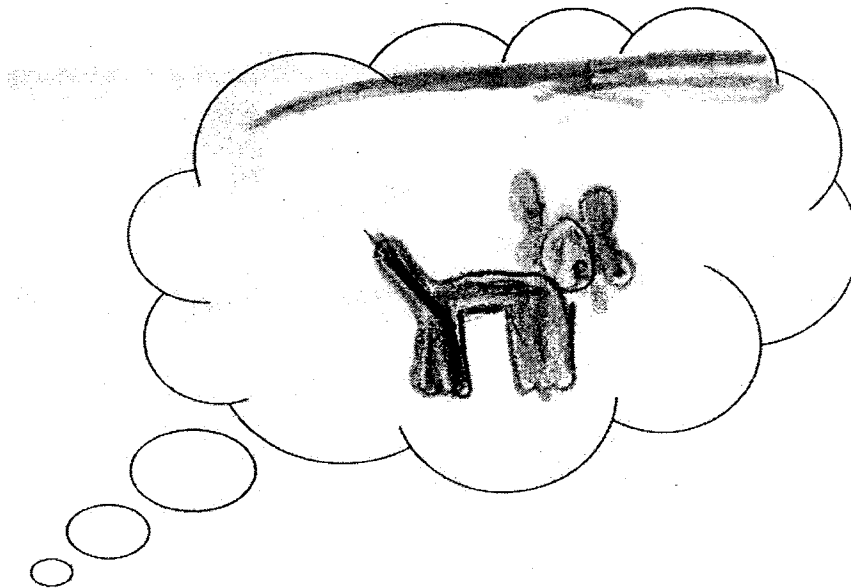

Figure 5. Drawing example 5. Children's drawing, indicating their understanding of the story theme.

TAKE HOME PARENT ACTIVITY HANDOUT

After reading the below story to your child, ask your child to draw what comes to his/her mind when listening to the story. In this way children will conceptualize the story and internalize the values learnt from the story.

WEEK 7: Trust:

- Story about trust: "The lost purse": A brother and a sister, wanted to buy a special gift for their mother on mother's day. They had saved their allowance money for a month so that they could afford to buy her a beautiful gift to say how much they loved her. One day they were passing by a jewellery store where they saw a beautiful set of shiny earrings and both decided that they would look perfect on her and that she would love them. They hurried into the store and asked for that earring set, but realized that they were short of money. They were very sad and decided to leave the store. On their way out, they saw an old lady who was also leaving the store drop her purse on the ground. They quickly picked it up and ran after the old lady to return it to her. When they returned the purse to the old lady, she was so happy that they were honest children and they could be trusted that's why they did not steal money from her purse. So she decided to reward them. She opened her purse and said "Because you are honest children and can be trusted with a stranger's purse, I will give you $10 as a reward. Thank you". Do you know what this meant? That they could finally afford to buy their mother the beautiful set of earrings and on top of that, they could each buy an ice-cream cone too.
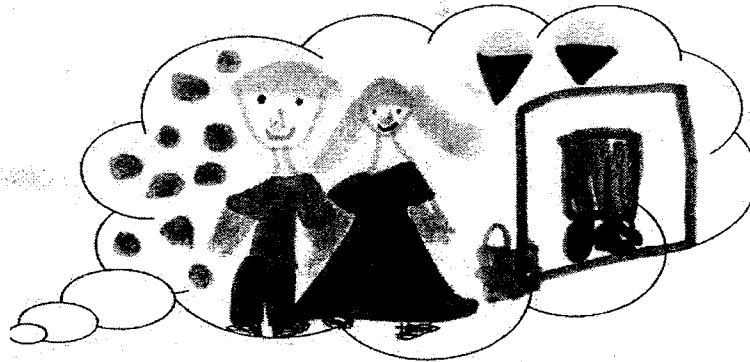

Figure 6. Drawing example 6. *Children's drawing, indicating their understanding o the story theme.*

Educators' Perspectives

During the workshop, the educators were given a poster consisting of the weekly story theme as well as questions to ask the children concerning the story. Three educators divided the task of presenting the poster to the students in their class on a weekly basis. Following the workshop, the educators' perspectives of the poster activities were solicited. Two of the educators found the poster activity to be helpful and that it matched their teaching philosophy as the themes of the stories were important to their educational values. However, they thought that the children participating in the poster activity the most, were the children who participated in the workshop, and the other children in the class seemed to be confused at times as all they could see were pictures and a story and it did not engage them in group activities within the classroom. However, since the poster session was specifically designed for the children participating in the workshop to remind them of the values of the story throughout the week, they seemed to enjoy listening to the stories again and being asked questions related to the story. When children were asked if they enjoyed the poster activities, 6 children said that they enjoyed it (e.g., "Yeah, once they gave us a test about it. It was fun"; "yeah, because we got to see them again and the pictures"); whereas, 3 children said that the educators did not do any poster activities with them. This could be due to the fact that the 3 students were in another class doing their homework and this caused them to miss the poster session.

General results

In general, quantitative results showed that children's behaviour did not have any significant changes during the workshop sessions; whereas, results of children's

behaviour before and after the workshop showed significant changes in positive behaviours and social interaction in the classroom setting. Moreover, qualitative results showed that when children's responses to the vignettes prior to and following the workshop were compared, children used more affective perspective-taking and empathy in their responses to similarly structured vignettes, following the workshop than prior to the workshop, suggesting that they benefitted from the workshop in increasing their use of the affective perspective-taking and empathy skills. In addition, children's responses to the interviews also showed an understanding of social skills and how children incorporated the skills and values from the workshop to their daily lives. The parents' and educators' involvement in the study was a benefit to the study as they reinforced children's weekly learnt skills in the classroom and home settings. The findings of the study are discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of the present study was to assess the influence of teaching the value of social skills to young children as a way to enhance their prosocial behaviour and increase their affective perspective-taking abilities and empathy skills. The following questions were investigated: (a) Did the children's participation in the social skills workshop have an influence on their prosocial behaviour (positive behaviour and social interaction)?; (b) did the children's participation in the social skills workshop influence their perceptions of affective perspective-taking and empathy?; and (c) how did the children who participated in the social skills workshop understand social skills? Did their views of social skills change as a result of the intervention?

The overall results of the study indicated partial support for the facilitation of prosocial behaviour, as a result of the social skills workshop. In addition, children reported some changes in their perceptions of affective perspective-taking and empathy skills. Finally, children reported an understanding of the importance of social skills in their daily lives. The following discussion section is organized by research question and the results are interpreted and discussed.

Research Question 1. *Did the children's participation in the social skills workshop have an influence on their prosocial behaviour (positive behaviour and social interaction)?*

Children's behaviour in the classroom setting

Positive Behaviour

The educators from the afterschool program reported that there was a difference in children's positive behaviour when comparing their positive behaviour before and after the 8-week workshop session. More specifically, the educators reported greater

improvement in children's use of appropriate language, expression of feelings and respecting others and property. During the social skills workshop, the children were encouraged to compliment one another, apologize when necessary, as well as share ideas and thoughts. Therefore, children's use of appropriate language may have increased because they were given the opportunity to interact using appropriate language during the workshop (i.e., game about complimenting friends). In addition, children's expression of feelings may have increased as a result of their participation in the feeling thermometer game where they expressed how they felt at each workshop session and why. During their group discussions, they also shared personal stories with the group. Children were also exposed to games related to feelings (i.e., "how do you feel when..."), as one of the main objectives of the current research was to increase their affective perspective-taking and empathy skills. Another important aspect of the workshop was teaching children respect towards others and property and it was reinforced throughout the workshop sessions and linked to the theme of each week through games and activities (i.e., game about helping a poor family by passing food to the village). It seems that according to the educators, children's respect towards others and property clearly increased after their participation in the workshop sessions.

Social Interaction

According to the educators, children's social interactions also improved. The workshop emphasized the value of understanding how others would feel in different situations, as well as how to deal with situations that involved mixed feelings and different perspectives (i.e., game about 'what is fair'). Children were involved in role play, story and discussion time, expression of feelings through the feeling thermometer

game and participated in group activities that required them to understand how others felt in different situations and how to help them feel better and resolve their problems.

These improvements of positive behaviour and social interaction in children who participated in the workshop are consistent with research on social skills interventions that show increase in prosocial behaviour after their participation in the social skills programs (e.g., Baker-Henningham, Walker, Powell, & Gardner, 2009; Conroy & Brown, 2004; Edwards, Hunt, Meyers, Grogg, & Jarrett, 2005; Fox et al., 2002a; Fox et al., 2003; Fox et al., 2002b; Grossman et al., 1997).

Children's behaviour in the workshop setting

Positive and negative behaviours

Children's positive and negative behaviours were also observed during the social skills workshop sessions by two observers who recorded the group's observed behaviours as they were related to their use of language, their use of movement, their behaviours with objects and turn-taking. However, results did not show any significant improvements in children's behaviour from the beginning (week 2) to the end of the workshop (week 8). Results are inconsistent with the educators' observations who rated the children's social skills as improving. In addition, when previous studies used teacher and parent reports in social skills, they did not find statistically significant differences between social skills intervention groups and control groups, whereas differences in negative behaviours and prosocial behaviours were found by trained observers across different settings (i.e., classroom, playground) (Grossman et al.,1997) and after 6 months post-intervention. A possible explanation for the variation of results could be the duration of the workshop; for example, previous studies indicated that children's

participation in workshop lasting 30 hours or more, resulted in long-term benefits to the children (Gresham et al., 2001). Moreover, as past research suggested, the length of observation is vital when examining children's exhibited behaviour, as well as their internalization of behaviour (Martin-Storey, Serbin, Stack, & Schwartzman, 2009). Even though the observers observed children's behaviour during the workshop and the educators assessed children's behaviour before and after the workshop, a reason for the inconsistency of the results could be related to the observational methods used to observe the children's behaviours. The educators observed the children in different settings and rated each child individually, whereas the observers observed the children as a group and operationalized the behaviours more broadly. Therefore, extended observations of each child individually with more clearly operationalized definitions would give a more accurate picture of the children's behaviour over time (Majdandzic & van den Boom, 2007). By limiting the observation checklist to 4 out of 16 sessions we could not accurately determine if the children's behaviour changed during the workshop.

Another possible explanation for the lack of improvement in children's social skills as observed by independent observers may be that the small sample size may not have been large enough and did not have sufficient power to detect a significant difference in children's behaviours over the four observed sessions. This limitation is also evident in Desbiens & Royer's (2003) study, where their small sample size in the social skills workshop (54 children divided in to three classrooms) did not show any behavioural or academic changes in third grade students with behavioural problems.

Another possible explanation for the inconsistencies between the observers' findings and previous research on social skills may be that the present study did not focus

on children who were experiencing behavioural difficulties. For example, previous studies, such as Frey et al.'s (2000), found that the Second Step Program (i.e., social skills program) decreased children's violent and school bullying behaviours and increased their empathy and social problem solving skills; their study sample consisted of children with behavioural problems, therefore the changes of behaviour were more apparent at follow up. However, in the present study, the children attending the workshop were children who did not have any behavioural problems; therefore, the behaviour changes may have been less during the workshop. In addition, the children's parents who signed their consent forms seemed to encourage these types of values to be taught to their children, suggesting that they may be using similar values in the home setting. Therefore, in this workshop, the 9 children did not seem to have any issues with their behaviour; thus their exhibition of any negative behaviours during the workshop were more related to their excitement during the games and activities, rather than misconduct.

Children's change of behaviour from one week to another

When the weeks of observations were compared to one another, results showed that there was a decrease in children's behaviour of waiting for turn in the third and fourth observations of the workshop (Week 7 and 8). This change in their behaviour could be due to the Christmas holidays that were between those two weeks of observation when the children did not attend the workshop for 3 weeks. Due to the gap of the last 2 workshop sessions, week 8 observations could serve as follow-up; however, results showed that there were no lasting short term effects of the program. This is inconsistent to Dereli's (2009) study who found that the social skills' study effects in children's

problem solving and understanding of feelings were long term. However, Dereli's study included 35 children in the experimental group and 20 children in the control group and was conducted over a 22 week period with 2 hour sessions. Moreover, the change in children's behaviour was measured through pre and post vignette style tests. Therefore, the larger sample size, the use of a control group, the duration of the program as well as the method of assessment may have contributed to the significant long term findings. Finally, the two observers did not use the observation measure for three weeks which could have altered their perceptions of the behaviour, particularly in the category "waiting for turn". For example, following the workshop, the observers reported that they thought that during discussion time, children who were raising their hands and were called upon, were the ones considered to be waiting for their turn, yet other children who raised their hands but were not called upon (i.e. due to time constraint or change of activity) were not considered as having waited for their turn. Therefore, in this way, the observers reported fewer instances of "waiting for turn" in week 4. Moreover, in week 8, children played a game that was based on role-playing and the goal of the game was to help a poor family who had no food to eat they stood in a row and passed on the food from one child to the other towards the family. In this instance, the observers noticed that some children were leaving the line and changing their position and considered it to be not waiting for their turn; however, children were changing their place to be closer to the 'village' where the poor family lived so that they could be the ones giving the food to them. In this situation, their behaviour in the game was acceptable as they were being involved in the game and taking their role seriously to help the poor family. These are a

few possible explanations of why children's waiting for turn behaviour seemed to show a decrease from week 3 to week 4 of observations.

Children's change of behaviour within the workshop session

When children's behaviour was divided in to three sections: the beginning, middle and end of the workshop, two significant changes were observed in children's behaviour. First, results showed that children's positive behaviour was significantly higher in the beginning of each workshop session (1st 10 minutes) than the end of each workshop session(3rd 10 minutes); and second, children's positive behavior was significantly higher that their negative behaviour at the beginning of each workshop session. A reason for this change of behaviour may be that at the beginning of each workshop session, the children were engaged in the "feeling" thermometer game to allow them to express their feelings. Moreover, story time was incorporated in the lesson to introduce the theme of the weekly workshop and included a short story and animated pictures. After story time, children were engaged in a role playing activity so that they would learn to absorb the meaning of the story and integrate it in to their daily lives. Therefore, children's positive behaviour was higher than the negative behaviour at the beginning of the workshop and children's positive behaviour was also higher at the beginning of the workshop session, in comparison to the end of the workshop where children were engaged in activities requiring physical activity, such as running games, games requiring jumping over obstacles and crawling through tunnels. Moreover, the time of day may have impacted children's mood as the workshop was held from 4:00pm to 5:00pm and children were already tired from their full school day. In addition, it appeared to me as the interventionist, that more negative behaviours may have been observed when the

observers were present in the classroom. Even though the observers were introduced to the children, and their role as observers throughout the workshop setting was described to the children, the children tended to look at them and tried to listen to what they were saying to each other. On one occasion, one of the children turned to one of the observers and said, "I heard what you just said" in an abrupt manner, which suggests that he thought they were talking about him. In this case, it was possible that the "reverse of a Hawthorne Effect" (Fisher & Lerner, 1994, p. 458) occurred, where children were illustrating more negative behaviours rather than positive ones in the presence of observers. This could have happened because of the small size of the room where the observers sat behind the children throughout the workshop session and the children felt their presence in the classroom.

In general, results from the observations in the classroom setting showed an increase in children's prosocial behaviour, whereas, results from the observation during the workshop did not support an increase in prosocial behaviour. The results of the present study seemed to be inconsistent with previous studies that found that their social skills program decreased children's negative behaviours (e.g., Baker-Henningham et al., 2009; Sprague & Perkins, 2009; Taub, 2001; Van Schoiak-Edstrom et al., 2002). However, other studies of Grossman et al. (1997) and McMahon, et al. (2000) noted that changes in children's behaviour were observed differently by the observers and by the teachers, before and after the implementation of the social skills. McMahon et al. (2000) suggested that a possible reason for the inconsistency of their results was due to the fact that "...teacher ratings were accurate in assessing behavioural change, and behavioural observations suggested temporary changes that were influenced by other variables (i.e.,

class activities)" (McMahon et al., 2000, p. 278). Moreover, the authors suggested that a larger number of observations from the observers during the workshop could have helped solve the discrepancy (McMahon et al., 2000).

Research Question 2. *Did the children's participation in the social skills workshop influence their perceptions of affective perspective-taking and empathy?*

Results showed a positive change in children's responses in both affective perspective-taking and empathy tasks after the completion of the workshop. Therefore, these results showed a positive influence of the social skills workshop on children's perceptions of affective perspective-taking and empathy after their participation in the workshop.

Affective perspective-taking skills

Child interviews were used to assess children's understanding of affective perspective-taking before the workshop; these questions focused on themes related to children's social interaction with their peers and families. Results showed that when children's peers were depicted as sad, angry or happy; 6 out of 9 children were able to recognize their sad facial expression, and 2 were able to recognize their angry and happy facial expressions. Similarly, 7 out of 9 children were able to predict how their parents would feel in a sad or angry situation.

To examine children's perceptions of affective perspective-taking in greater depth, two vignettes were administered to the children before and after the eight-week workshop sessions, to view how their responses to the vignettes would change after their participation in the workshop. The first vignette focused on children's ability to recognize the story character's feelings in four different scenarios. Results showed that at

follow up, 7 out of 9 children's responses to the affective perspective-taking vignettes showed recognition of the story character's feelings, as compared to two children at pretest. The second vignette emphasized children's recognition of their and their best friend's feelings in four different hypothetical situations. Results were more complex. Prior to the workshop, 2 children correctly recognized their and their best friend's feelings in the various scenarios based on the affective perspective-taking task, however the other 7 children incorporated empathy for their friend in their responses and changed their feelings to match their friend's feelings in the different situations. For example, when children were asked how they would feel if everyone wanted to play with them and no one with their friend, the 7 children responded that they would feel sad because no one wanted to play with their friend. Furthermore, one of the seven children replied that *he* would feel sad; yet his friend would be happy as he knew that his best friend wanted to play with him/her. In an affective perspective-taking task, this would not be considered to be the correct answer; however, since I was looking at both affective perspective-taking, as well as empathy skills, both of these perceptions were considered in analyzing the children's responses. Interestingly, children's responses changed at follow up (possibly as a result of the intervention), as only one child gave a response favoring the affective perspective-taking perspective, whereas 8 out of 9 children responded using empathy in their responses. More surprisingly, responses of the 7 out of the 8 children who has said that they would feel sad if their friend would feel sad, also responded that they felt comfortable in trusting their friends to feel sad for them in the situation where they would feel sad. To be more specific, when children were asked how their friend would feel in the situation where s/he (their friend) would be able to buy a toy that s/he

wanted, but they (the child) would not be able to, 7 out of the 9 children responded that their friend would also feel sad for them as they would not be able to buy the toy they wanted; yet, one of the 9 children replied that he would feel happy because his friend would be able to buy the toy s/he liked and then they would be able to share it and play together. Children's responses on vignettes following the workshop showed that not only did the children recognize others' feelings in various situations, but they also showed compassion and understanding for others. Results are consistent with intervention research on affective perspective-taking and empathy that have also reported improvements in those skills as a result of social skills programs (e.g., Edwards et al., 2005; Grizenko et al., 2000; McMahon & Washburn, 2003).

Child drawings

Children's drawings were also analyzed for showing an ability to label facial expressions (i.e., when asked to draw a situation that would make them feel sad prior to their participation in the workshop). Two out of the 9 children labeled themselves as being happy, with a smile on their face. After the eight-week workshop follow up, all 9 children were able to correctly label the sad facial expressions in their drawing. In addition, prior to the workshop, only 3 grade one children were able to make a contrast of happy and sad facial expressions in their drawings when labeling themselves as sad and the other characters as happy. However, following the workshop, 2 kindergarten and 3 grade one students were able to show contrasting facial expressions in their drawing (i.e., including children with both happy and sad facial expressions in the hypothetical situation). The change in children's drawings showed a clearer understanding of their labeling and recognizing abilities of feelings.

Empathy skills

Children's perceptions of empathy were analyzed in their interviews by a question asking them if they had done something nice to their friends and family. Children's responses showed signs of empathy towards their peers and family. To examine their understanding of empathy skills at a higher level, two empathy vignettes that were related to one another were used before and after the eight-week workshop sessions. The first vignette focused on how the children thought the story character (the victim) felt in a given situation; how they felt for that character and the reason for that behaviour; the second part of the empathy vignette was used to find out how the children thought another story character (the bully) felt and how they felt for that character and the reasons for that behaviour. Results showed that before and after the workshop, all nine children thought the story character (the victim) felt sad in the given situation and 8 children felt sad for him/her. This suggested that children were able to understand how the story character was feeling in that scenario and they showed an understanding of empathy. The second part of the story was more complex as it dealt with the other character (the bully). Children's responses were that they all thought the story character (the bully) felt sad in that situation, yet only six children felt sad for him; two children felt happy and one child felt angry. Children also elaborated their responses and added elements of fairness and incorporated values taught to them during the workshop such as sharing and waiting for turn as they were related to the story of the two characters (the victim and the bully). Results on the empathy tasks showed that children had a deeper understanding of others' feelings in different situations and felt more at ease and identified with the victim of the story; they also mentioned elements of fairness and prosocial behaviour in their

responses; which was not apparent in the same structured vignettes before the workshop. Results are consistent with previous intervention research showing an increase in children's caring for others and consideration towards others (Cooke et al., 2007), and an increased understanding of empathy (e.g., Edwards, et al., 2005; McMahon & Washburn, 2003).

In conclusion, results from children's responses to the affective perspective-taking vignettes, empathy tasks as well as their drawings following the workshop, showed that children incorporated values from the workshop (i.e., recognizing and understanding how others feel in different situations, as well showing empathy, understanding and support to their friends) in answering the vignettes of hypothetical situations. These responses consistently showed an improvement in children's perceptions of perspective-taking and empathy, possibly linked to their experiences in the eight-week social skills workshop sessions.

***Research Question 3**. How did the children who participated in the social skills workshop understand social skills? Did their views of social skills change as a result of the intervention?*

One of the goals of the workshop was to introduce the values of the social skills to the children through the workshop activities that included stories and games. Child interviews were administered to collect information on what the children learnt from the workshop. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions asking the children what they liked and disliked about the workshop, what they learnt and which skills they would integrate in their everyday lives.

Social skills

Children's responses to the interviews following the workshop showed that they

captured the values from the workshop and learnt to incorporate them in their everyday

life. In the interviews, when children were asked which skills they would use with their

peers and family after the workshop, the themes of sharing, caring, being generous,

helpful and nice as well as team-work were mentioned by the children (e.g., "...sharing

because I share a lot of my toys with my brother"; Andrew (pseudonym) gave me his

Panda bear and I gave mine to my brother, now, I will share my things"; "I'll play in

groups and teams"). All these themes paralleled the themes that were used to plan the

workshop activities and these values were reinforced through interactive games, as well

as discussions. Moreover, when children were asked which game they liked the most

from the workshop, interestingly, some children mentioned the game and the theme

related to it, showing that they were able to remember and internalize the value

associated to the game they were playing and not just the game itself (e.g., "The mouse

game, it was about friendship and we were trying to help the mouse so the cat wouldn't

eat it"; "when we had to change the hat and be patient for our turn"; "tap hands and run

and wait for your turn,"; "I also liked the hockey game because it was not about losing or

winning but just about having fun"). When children were asked what they learnt from

the workshop, children were able to give a list of values such as sharing, being patient,

kind, generous and nice to others, trust others as well as be trusted, be thoughtful of

others and not hurt others' feelings. Surprisingly, children also showed that they were

able to remember weekly themes from previous weeks, even from week 1 which showed

how they had internalized many of the values taught to them throughout the workshop.

In addition, children's responses to the empathy vignettes at follow up showed that they recalled values such as sharing, caring and waiting for one's turn. Children seemed to make a clearer link between the values that they learnt during the workshop and the empathy vignette; for example, they described how they felt for the story characters and why, and they gave additional reasons related to the values of the social skills than those given prior to the workshop (e.g., "Sad, because he has no blocks, he should have waited for his turn. I always wait for my turn"; "sad, because he could have shared and played together"). The above quotes showed that children were able to understand what the social skills represented and were able to describe the importance of these values. These responses provided additional support for reinforcing social skills linked to specific values. Results from the study of McMahon et al. (2000), also found an increase in children's understanding of social skills after their participation in the Second Step Program, for a duration of one year. Nevertheless, since this workshop was over a period of 8 weeks, children's understanding of social skills may have dramatically increased if the duration of the current study lasted as long as the Second Step Program.

General conclusion

In conclusion, the results of the current study provided some important information related to children's understandings and perceptions of affective perspective-taking and empathy. Yet, it also raised other questions related to the observations of the children's positive behaviour and negative behaviour. In the discussion section, possible explanations were given as to why children's responses of understanding affective perspective-taking and empathy skills changed as a result of the intervention; as well as why educators reported that children's positive behaviour in the classroom setting

improved; yet independent observations of behaviour during the workshop did not reveal any positive changes. Despite the inconsistencies in the findings, children's interviews revealed that they seemed to learn from the social skills workshop and they also seemed to enjoy the stories, games and activities. Nevertheless, the current study could have revealed different findings if some elements of the workshop differed. The limitations of the study that could have impacted these results are discussed in the following section.

Limitations

Although the current study adds a new element to the traditional social skill's workshop style by incorporating the teaching of values related to the social skills, there are a number of limitations in the study that need to be discussed. These limitations include the sample size, workshop duration and the observation method.

Sample Size

The sample for this project was considered to be both adequate and small at the same time. Since this was a mixed methods study, the sample size was fairly justified for the qualitative part of the study; yet, it was considered to be small for the quantitative part of the study. One of the major issues with this study was the fact that results in children's behaviour during the workshop did not show any significant changes after their participation in the 8-week workshop sessions. Perhaps with a larger sample, larger differences could have been revealed. However, since the study's main goal was to conduct social skills workshop for children in an afterschool program, it may have been difficult for 1 person to conduct the workshop to a large group of children. Therefore, the small sample helped in creating a small group feeling and also helped in creating close attachments between the children and the researcher.

Another draw back related to the sample size, was the fact that there was no control group, in comparison to other studies of social skills with children (e.g., Dereli, 2009; Grizenko, et al., 2000). In future studies, perhaps children could be randomly assigned to three different groups: (a) control group, (b) social skills with teaching of values and (c) social skills groups without teaching of values.

Duration of Program

Another limitation to the study was the duration of the workshop. Children could have benefitted from the workshop if it was delivered to them throughout the academic year instead of only through 16-hour sessions. However, a decision for the duration of the workshop was made so that the study could include parents and teachers who may not have agreed to participate for a long term project.

Another limitation included was that the afterschool program schedule was not fixed and in some days children would be picked up early, on other days they left later and in some days if the family had other plans, the children would not stay at the afterschool program at all. Therefore, a shorter yet intensive workshop was designed to introduce the values of the social skills to children in a specific amount of time. Moreover, to compensate for the duration of the workshop, the time of the workshop sessions were long, each lasting one hour, which is longer than other social skills programs that lasted between 20 to 30 minutes each (e.g., PALS, Second Step Program). In this way, a large number of games and activities were scheduled to fit in over eight weeks.

Furthermore, since time was of the essence, the 8 week workshop sessions began in mid-October and ended in December; however due to absences and pedagogical days,

the last week had to be rescheduled after the holiday break (Mid-January). In this way, children were not involved with the social skills workshop for 3 weeks. This change of scheduling may have altered children's behaviour, as well as the observers' observation skills may have been influenced in the last week of observation.

Observation Method

The observation tool used to observe children as a group rather than individually, caused some issues during the observation process. Past research states that individual children's observation takes more time to assess, especially when looking at a large group of children, therefore group observation can be beneficial for teacher's use in intervention programs, in order to see the whole picture of children's behaviours (Krasch & Carter, 2009). However, this can also be a challenge for observers who are trying to assess a group of children at the same time. Even though the current study contained nine children, the observers found it difficult to observe the children as a group, especially when the children were engaged in group work and were divided in to two groups.

Moreover, the observers found the subscales of the observer checklist to be somewhat challenging as some behaviours were harder to observe than others (i.e., the subscales of waiting for turn and movement). However, due to high inter-rater reliability among the two observers, it showed that the observers were able to observe similar behaviours. Nevertheless, another issue that came up was that the observers were unclear on how to code some behaviours, such as shouting; pushing/ pulling, waiting for turn, misusing objects and leaving the group. As it was discussed earlier, in some of the activities these behaviours were acceptable based on the content and context of the

games. Therefore, the observers may have overestimated the frequency of negative behaviours in these contexts.

Another issue that influenced children's behaviour during the observation was the observers' presence in the workshop class. Children seemed to be distracted by their presence and they seemed to act out more when the observers were present than when they were absent. For future work, it would be beneficial to use an observational tool such as a hidden video-camera or conduct the workshop in an observation classroom with a one-way mirror, so that children would not feel the pressure of being observed. In this study both options mentioned were not accessible.

Directions for Future Research

Even though the current study had some limitations, the results based on educators' observation were promising. In addition, the children showed an increased understanding of the importance of affective perspective-taking and empathy, as well as an increase in their knowledge of social skills. However, for this study to be more successful over a longer period of time, it is suggested that the workshop becomes incorporated in the classroom setting by the teachers of the children (Baker-Henningham, et al., 2009; Gresham et al., 2001; Quinn, 2002). In addition, previous researchers have suggested that children benefit from such activities in the mornings when they are more energetic and receptive to new ideas (Lotze, Treutwein, & Roenneberg, 2000; Randler & Frech, 2009).

In addition, an experimental and control group can be used to examine whether children participating in these types of workshops benefit from the workshops or if the results are due to other variables. Observational tools that are operationally defined to

assess individual children's behaviours in a more systematic way may reveal important information about the progress of individual children. In order for the workshop to have long-term effects, the workshop sessions can be extended throughout children's academic year and reviewed on an ongoing basis. Finally, more information is needed about what parents did to reinforce these values at home and a more systematic program could be designed for parents who reinforced these values in the home setting.

Implications for Policy and Educational Practice

Since previous research suggested that the use of affective perspective-taking and empathy skills lead to more prosocial behaviour and increased use of social skills in children (Denham et al., 2002a; Strayer & Roberts, 2004), it is important to incorporate these skills in social skills programs. The school environment provides a context for teaching the values of social skills to children beginning in kindergarten so that they can have the tools required to cooperate and get along with their peers. Learning about the values of expression of feelings, friendship, team-work, kindness, caring, helpfulness, trust, and generosity from a young age may increase their success with friendships and help them develop strong and resilient long-term relationships with their peers (e.g., Wojslawowicz Bowker, Rubin, Burgess, Booth-LaForce, & Rose-Krasnor, 2006). These interventions may be used with young children in kindergarten and grade one who enjoy games, stories and role play activities. Moreover, many of these activities can be adapted for children who are experiencing behavioural and emotional problems (e.g., Desbiens and Royer, 2003), developmental disabilities (e.g., Richardson, Toison, Huang, & Lee, 2009) or as part of whole school programs designed to prevent school bullying (e.g., DeRosier, 2004).

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Appendices

a. COVER LETTER

b. PARENT & CHILD CONSENT FORMS

c. EDUCATOR CONSENT FORM

d. CHILD INTERVIEWS

e. CHILD VIGNETTES

f. CHILD DRAWINGS

g. PARENT-CHILD QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

h. EDUCATOR BEHAVIOUR CHECKLIST

i. OBSERVER BEHAVIOUR CHECKLIST

j. LESSON PLAN (1-8 WEEKS)

k. EDUCATOR POSTERS (1-8 WEEKS)

l. EDUCATOR EVALUATION FORM

m. TAKE HOME PARENT ACTIVITY HANDOUTS (1-8 WEEKS)

n. PARENT EVALUATION FORM

o. CHILD CERTIFICATES

p. ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER

SOCIAL SKILLS AND ETHICAL VALUES WORKSHOP

I am Mariam Khatchadourian, a Master's student at Concordia University in the Department of Education.

I am very interested in children's social behaviour and social interactions. Particularly, I am interested in working with children from a young age to promote the development of social skills. I believe that if they are given the opportunity to practice these skills it will help them develop or improve their prosocial behaviour and social interactions. This year, in the afterschool program, we are offering a social skills program to the children and observing to understand how the children like these activities and how they help them with their social skills.

If you would like your child to participate in the afterschool workshop which includes:

- **8 weeks of social skills sessions, at no extra cost to you**

- **Games, physical activities, role-play, story-telling, art crafts and group discussions**

- **Discussion of the following issues: Expression of feelings, friendship, team-work, helpfulness, kindness, trust, patience and generosity**

Please read the following consent form to get more information

Also, note that all data collected from your children, you and the educators will remain CONFIDENTIAL and the names of the participants will not be revealed in the final report of my master's thesis.

I really hope that your children will participate in this workshop,

Thank you,
Yours sincerely,
Mariam Khatchadourian

CONSENT FORM FOR CHILD AND PARENT TO PARTICIPATE IN SOCIAL SKILL'S AND ETHICAL VALUE'S EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP

This is to state that I _____ parent/guardian of
_____ agree for my child and I to participate in a program of research being conducted by Mariam Khatchadourian of the Education Department of Concordia University, under the supervision of Dr. Harriet Petrakos.
(Telephone: (514) 290-2413; e-mail: m_khatc@education,concordia.ca)

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research project is to study the influence of a social skills program on children's social behaviour, emotional understanding and empathy skills.

B. PROCEDURE

I have been informed that the procedure is the following:

a. The research will be conducted in the after school program at ▮▮▮▮ Elementary School. The study will begin in October, 2009 and the participants will be 5-6 year old children, their parents and the afterschool educators.

b. A behaviour checklist will be completed by the student's educators for each child participating; the checklists of children's behaviour will be completed by the educators who know the children best. In this way we will see what type of activities would be more beneficial for each individual child taking part in the workshop.

c. A parent-child questionnaire form will be completed by the parents; it will consist of two hypothetical stories, and parents will check the appropriate boxes of how their child would react in those situations. In addition, parents will briefly describe how they would respond to their child in those hypothetical situations. In this way we will see what type of activities would be more beneficial for each individual child taking part in the workshop.

d. Participating children will be interviewed individually by the researcher to see their perceptions about their behaviour and peer relations. Also, the children will respond to questions based on short stories and drawings to allow me to understand their understanding of emotions and empathy skills. These activities will take about 15 minutes to complete.

e. The workshop will begin on October 27, 2009 and end by December 17, 2009. It will be held for 8 weeks and will consist of 2 sessions per week (Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 4:00-5:00 pm). Every session will have a different topic and will include games, activities, role-plays and crafts, so that children will discuss and practice social skills in an interactive and fun way.

f. Every week a poster will be given to the educators and they will be encouraged to introduce it to the class to remind children what they learn in the workshop. In this way, educators could reinforce children's weekly learnt skills during the week. At the end of the study, educators will complete a short evaluation form to assess the use of the posters.

g. Also, a take-home parent activity handout will be given to the children to bring home to you, the parents and you can use these activities to reinforce the children's weekly learnt skills in the home setting. At the end of the study, you the parents will complete a short evaluation form to assess the use of the activities.

h. After the workshop (beginning of January, 2010), the children will be asked for a second interview with the researcher to ask their opinion about the program and if they believe it helped them develop their social skills. In addition short stories and drawings will be used to assess any changes in the children's emotional understanding, perspective-taking and empathy skills. These activities will last about 15 minutes. Also, another behaviour checklist will be completed by the student's educators for each child participating.

i. At the end of the second child interviews, children will be given certificates of participation in the social skills program to thank them for participating in the study.

j. The study will end in mid-January.

Participant's confidentiality and well being is very important in this study, and as such, participant's information and identity will be secured. This is a voluntary project and you will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time; however, your participation is crucial to assess the implementation of a new intervention program that may help children develop or improve social skills.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

The afterschool program will provide a room for the workshop and it will be a safe environment for the children. This study does not foresee any risks to the children as they will be supervised at all times and the topics of the workshop will be appropriate to the age and developmental level of each child.

There are many benefits to this study for children, as it gives them a chance to practice their social skills. Our main objective is to assess how this type of program helps children develop and improve their social skills. Your participation as a parent will be an asset and will further encourage the children to use newly learnt skills in the home setting.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my and my child's consent and discontinue our participation at any time without negative consequences.

- I understand that my and my child's participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL

- I understand that the data from this study may be published (participant's identity will remain confidential).   -

- I understand that the data from this study will be used to give a brief report of the general group findings without identifying particular children or school staff in summary of the report.

*PLEASE RETURN THE FOLLOWING SECTION OF THE FORM TO THE
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM COORDINATOR BY OCTOBER, 16, 2009*

✂ ---

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE THAT MY CHILD AND I
PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

CHILD'S NAME (Please print):_____

GUARDIAN'S NAME (please print):_____

SIGNATURE: _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

✂ ---

***ATTACHED YOU WILL FIND THE PARENT-CHILD QUESTIONNAIRE FORM.
PLEASE FILL IT IN AND GIVE IT ALONG WITH THE CONSENT FORM TO THE
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM COORDINATOR.**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

*If you require to obtain a copy of the report on the findings from this study, please contact the
m_khatc@education.concordia.ca or at (514) 290-2413*

In case of decision to withdraw from the study, you can contact:

Mariam Khatchadourian on (514) 290-2413 or at m_khatc@education.concordia.ca
Harriet Petrakos on (514) 848-2424, ext. 2013 or at hpetrakos@education.concordia.ca
Belinda Magee on (514) 482-6086 or at rvehomeschool@yahoo.ca

*If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact
Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at (514) 848-2424
ext. 7481 or by email at areid@alcor.concordia.ca*

CONSENT FORM FOR EDUCATOR TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SKILL'S AND ETHICAL VALUE'S EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP

This is to state that I _____ agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Mariam Khatchadourian of the Education Department of Concordia University, under the supervision of Dr. Harriet Petrakos.
(Telephone: (514) 290-2413; e-mail: m_khatc@education,concordia.ca)

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research project is to study the influence of a social skills program on children's social behaviour, emotional understanding and empathy skills.

B. PROCEDURES

I have been informed that the procedure is the following:

a. The research will be conducted in the after school program at ████████ Elementary School. The study will begin in October, 2009 and the participants will be 5-6 year old children, their parents and the afterschool educators.

b. A behaviour checklist will be completed by the educators for each child participating; the checklists of children's behaviour will be completed by the educators who know the children best. In this way we will see what type of activities would be more beneficial for each individual child taking part in the workshop.

c. A parent-child questionnaire form will be completed by the parents; it will consist of two hypothetical stories, and parents will check the appropriate boxes of how their child would react in those situations. In addition, parents will briefly describe how they would respond to their child in those hypothetical situations. In this way we will see what type of activities would be more beneficial for each individual child taking part in the workshop.

d. Participating children will be interviewed individually by the researcher to see their perceptions about their behaviour and peer relations. Also, the children will respond to questions based on short stories and drawings to allow me to understand their understanding of emotions and empathy skills. These activities will take about 15 minutes to complete.

e. The workshop will begin on October 27, 2009 and end by December 17, 2009. It will be held for 8 weeks and will consist of 2 sessions per week (Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 4:00-5:00 pm). Every session will have a different topic and will include games, activities, role-plays and crafts, so that children will discuss and practice social skills in an interactive and fun way.

f. Every week a poster will be given to the educators and they will be encouraged to introduce it to the class to remind children what they learn in the workshop. In this way, educators could reinforce children's weekly learnt skills during the week. At the end of the study, educators will complete a short evaluation form to assess the use of the posters.

g. Also, a take-home parent activity handout will be given to the children to bring home to you, the parents and you can use these activities to reinforce the children's weekly learnt

skills in the home setting. At the end of the study, you the parents will complete a short evaluation form to assess the use of the activities.

h. After the workshop (beginning of January, 2010), the children will be asked for a second interview with the researcher to ask their opinion about the program and if they believe it helped them develop their social skills. In addition short stories and drawings will be used to assess any changes in the children's emotional understanding, perspective-taking and empathy skills. These activities will last about 15 minutes. Also, another behaviour checklist will be completed by the student's educators for each child participating.

i. At the end of the second child interviews, children will be given certificates of participation in the social skills program to thank them for participating in the study.

j. The study will end in mid-January.

The **Behaviour Checklist** is a form which includes different types of behaviours of the student during the afterschool program. The educator will evaluate children's behaviour individually by circling one of the 5 rating scales (e.g., almost never, seldom, sometimes, often, almost always). The form is very simple and quick to complete. This procedure will take place twice. The first evaluation will be at the beginning of the study before the workshop begins, and the second will be at the end of the study following the workshop sessions.

Participant's confidentiality and well being is very important in this study, and as such, participant's information and identity will be secured. This is a voluntary project and you will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time; however, your participation is crucial to assess the implementation of a new intervention program that may help children develop or improve social skills.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

The study does not foresee any risks to the participants. The children will be under the supervision of the researcher at all times. Educators will not be distracted from their class as this checklist can be completed at any time and place as children's general behaviour from the beginning of the school year will be assessed.
There are many benefits to this study for children, as it gives them a chance to practice their social skills. Our main objective is to assess how this type of program helps children develop and improve their social skills. Your participation as an educator will be an asset and will further encourage the children to use newly learnt skills in the classroom setting.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

• I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.

• I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL.

• I understand that the data from this study may be published (participant's identity will remain confidential).

- I understand that the data from this study will be used to give a brief report of the general group findings without identifying particular children or school staff in summary of the report.

PLEASE RETURN THE FOLLOWING SECTION OF THE FORM TO THE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM COORDINATOR BY OCTOBER, 16, 2009

✄ ---

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

EDUCATOR'S NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

✄ ---

***ATTACHED YOU WILL FIND THE CHILD BEHAVIOUR CHECKLIST.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

*If you require to obtain a copy of the report on the findings from this study, please contact the m_khatc@education.concordia.ca or at (514) 290-2413

*In case of decision to withdraw from the study, you can contact:

Mariam Khatchadourian on (514) 290-2413 or at m_khatc@education.concordia.ca
Harriet Petrakos on (514) 848-2424, ext. 2013 or at hpetrakos@education.concordia.ca
Belinda Magee on (514) 482-6086 or at rvehomeschool@yahoo.ca

*If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at (514) 848-2424 ext. 7481 or by email at areid@alcor.concordia.ca

CHILD INTERVIEW 1

Would you like to come with me to the cafeteria where I will ask you some questions about you and your friends and do some fun activities and drawings?
If you wish to stop at any time, you let me know and I will take you back to the classroom, ok?

1. Tell me what you like about your school.

_____

_____

2. Tell me what you don't like about your school.

_____

_____

3. Tell me about your friends and how you get along. (Wait until s/he answers). What do you like to do together?

_____

_____

4. Do you sometimes argue or fight with your friends? (Wait until s/he answers). Why?

_____

_____

5. If a friend said something to make you sad or angry, what would you do about it?
Sad:_____
Angry:_____

6. How do you know when your friend is sad, angry, happy? (Wait until s/he answers). What do you do about it?
Sad:_____
Angry:_____
Happy:_____

7. Tell me a story of when you did something nice to your friends, brother, sister or parents?

Friends:_____
Siblings:_____
Parents:_____

8. When you are playing games and you lose, how do you feel? (Wait until s/he answers). What do you do about it?

_____

_____

_____

9. If there is a fun new toy in class, would you want to play with it alone or with a friend? Why?

_____

_____

_____

10. Do you have any brothers or sisters? (if child reply no ask following: Any friends? Any neighbours?) If you were arguing with them and your mum or dad saw you, what would they tell you?

_____

_____

_____

CHILD INTERVIEW 2

Would you like to come with me to the cafeteria where I will ask you some questions about you and your friends and do some fun activities and drawings?
If you wish to stop at any time, you let me know and I will take you back to the classroom, ok?

1. Tell me what you like about your school.(to start with same way as previous interview to see if child's response has changes after the workshop)

_____

_____

2. Tell me what you don't like about your school.

_____

_____

3. What did you like about the workshop you participated in?

_____

_____

4. What did you not like about the workshop you participated in?

_____

_____

5. Did you have/make friends in the workshop?

_____

_____

6. Did you argue with your friends at the workshop?

_____

_____

7. Do you think that you will use the social skills you learnt in the workshop with your friends now?

_____

_____

_____

8. Which game/activity/lesson did you like most?

_____

_____

9. What did you learn from the workshop?

_____

_____

10. Did you enjoy the take home activities that you did with your parents at home? (Wait until child answers). The one with the educators? (Wait until child answers). Why?

Parents_____

Educators_____

- If we conducted a similar workshop in the future, would you like to participate?

_____

_____

_____

CHILD VIGNETTES 1

VIGNETTES PRIOR TO THE WORKSHOP

AFFECTIVE PERSPECTIVE-TAKING:
Adapted from Denham (1986)

Vignette 1:
Hypothetical story: Children will be asked if they like dogs and why. According to their answer, the character of the story will act differently when sees a dog. The child will be given 4 facial expression cards and will hold the one s/he thinks the character is expressing (happy, sad, angry, scared). [Short practice with children to identify 4 faces prior to the vignette sentences]
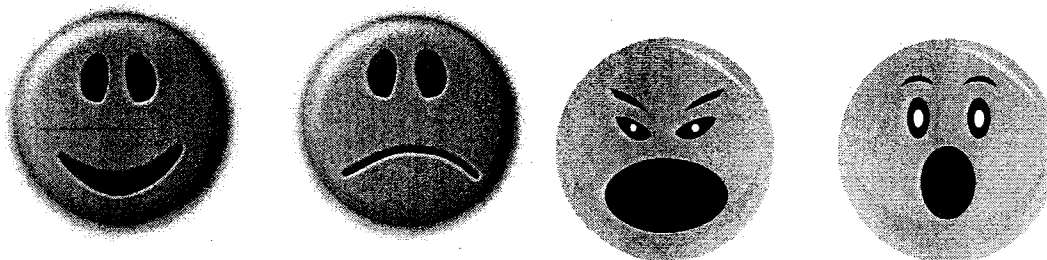
- a. Tony/Tina sees a dog in the park, she says look mum, there's a dog, can I go pet him? (happy)
- b. Tony/Tina sees a dog in the street, he/she goes in his/her house and locks the fence. (scared)
- c. Tony/Tina sees a dog in her garden and he/she shouts to the dog "get out, out". (angry)
- d. Tony/Tina sees his friend playing with his dog and not playing/ paying attention to him/her. (sad)

Vignette 2:
Hypothetical story: Children will be asked to name their best friend. According to their answer, 4 stories will be told to the child and the child will have to guess how s/he and his/her friend would feel in those situations. I am going to tell you some short pretend stories about you and _____. After each story I will ask you how you and your friend feel, (sad or happy).

(1) You and_____are colouring pictures together and your teacher comes over to tell you what a good job you are both doing. How do you feel? How does_____feel? (happy-happy)

(2) When you are out on the playground, everyone wants to play with you and no one wants to play with_____. How do you feel? How does_____feel? (happy-sad)

(3) You and_____are playing with your toys and someone walks by and steps on them.

Your favourite toy gets broken, but all of_____toys are okay. How do you feel? How does_____feel?
(sad-happy)

(4) The teacher yells at you and_____for not being quiet while she reads the class a story. How do you feel? How does_____feel?
(sad-sad)

EMPATHY:
Adapted from Strayer (1993)

Vignette 1
Hypothetical story: The child will be read a short story and at the end will be asked how he/she felt and how the character in the story felt and why.

Story: Emma/Eric goes to kindergarten at ▮▮▮▮▮ and s/he wanted to have a very big birthday party at her/his beautiful house garden. So she/he made invitations for her/his classmates and she/he invited all his classmates except one boy/girl, William/Wendy, who was shy and did not play with her/him very much. Wendy/William could hear how everyone was excited to go to the party where there would be clowns, ponies, bouncing castles and lots of food, but she was not invited and could not go.

Questions: How do you think Wendy/ William feels? Why?
How do you feel? Why?

Vignette 2
Hypothetical story: The child will be read a short story and at the end will be asked how he/she felt and how the character in the story felt and why.

Story: Emma/Eric's birthday arrives and she/he wakes up very excited because all the friends she/he wanted to come to her/his party were looking forward to come and s/he was going to get many gifts and ride a pony and jump on the bouncing castle.
But that day, a very heavy rain began to pour and there was no way his friends could go to her/his party. Emma/Eric's mother called all the parents whose children were invited to the party to let them know that the party was cancelled.

Questions: How do you think Emma/Eric feels? Why?
How do you feel? Why?

CHILD VIGNETTES 2

VIGNETTES FOLLOWING THE WORKSHOP

AFFECTIVE PERSPECTIVE-TAKING:
Adapted from Denham (1986)

Vignette 1:
Hypothetical story: Children will be asked if they like going to the doctor to take shots.
According to their answer, the character of the story will act differently when s/he goes to
the doctor. The child will be given 4 facial expression cards and will hold the one s/he
thinks the character is expressing (happy, sad, angry, scared). [Short practice with
children to identify 4 faces prior to the vignette sentences].
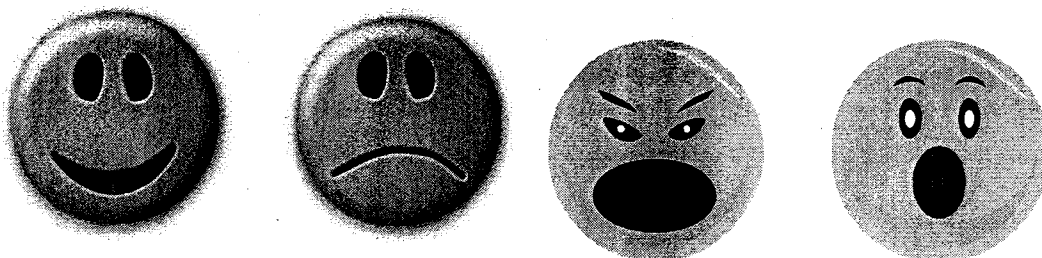
    a. Tony/Tina likes going to the doctor to take shots because the doctor
will give him/her candy (happy)
    b. Tony/Tina screams when he finds out he has to go to the doctor to take
his/her shot and has to be dragged by his mother to the doctor's office
(scared)
    c. Tony/Tina goes to the doctor's office to take a shot and breaks the toys
the doctor has in the waiting room (angry)
    d. Tony/Tina cries when he goes to the doctor (sad)

Vignette 2:
Hypothetical story: Children will be asked to name their best friend. According to their
answer, 4 stories will be told to the child and the child will have to guess how s/he and
his/her friend would feel in those situations. I am going to tell you some short pretend
stories about you and _____. After each story I will ask you how you and your friend
feel, (sad or happy).

(1) You and_____ask the teacher if you can go play on the playground. She lets you
both go play on the playground. How do you feel? How does_____feel?
(happy-happy)

(2) You both make houses out of blocks and then leave to get some more blocks.
When you come back, your house is still there but someone has knocked
down_____house. How do you feel? How does_____feel?
(happy-sad)

(3) You and_____go to the toy store together and each of you finds a different toy that you want. You do not get to buy a toy, but_____gets to buy the toy that he/she wanted. How do you feel? How does_____ feel?
(sad-happy)

(4) You and_____want to go outside and play a game together, but it starts to rain and you both have to stay inside all day. How do you feel? How does_____feel?
(sad-sad)

EMPATHY:
Adapted from Strayer (1993)

Vignette 1
Hypothetical story: The child will be read a short story and at the end will be asked how he/she felt and how the character in the story felt and why.

Story: John/Jenny goes to kindergarten at ███████ and she/he was playing with the dolls/blocks. Then suddenly, Jack/Jill another child comes and takes away the toys to play with from John/Jenny.

Questions: How do you think John/Jenny feels? Why?
How do you feel? Why?

Vignette 2
Hypothetical story: The child will be read a short story and at the end will be asked how s/he felt and how the character in the story felt and why.

Story: Jack/Jill takes the toys to the other side of the room and starts playing with them, when the teacher sees what happened and comes and takes the toys from Jack/Jill.

Questions: How do you think Jack/Jill feels? Why?
How do you feel? Why?

CHILD DRAWINGS

PRIOR TO THE WORKSHOP
DRAWING 1: (following the Empathy vignette)

Can you draw how you would feel if someone from your class had a party and invited everyone but did not invite you?

FOLLOWING THE WORKSHOP
DRAWING 2 (following the Empathy vignette)

Can you draw how you would feel if you were playing with a toy and someone came and took it from you?

PARENT-CHILD QUESTIONNAIRE FORM
Adapted from Cole, Dennis, Smith-Simon and Cohen (2008)

The parent-child questionnaire form examines children's behaviour in certain situations. It is developed to help us to understand how children perceive different situations, how that makes them feel and how they react to those situations.

Therefore, the best individual to evaluate children's behaviour would be their parents, as they know a lot about their behaviour in different situations and circumstances.

Below, is a hypothetical story; after reading the story, you will be asked to check one of the four boxes that would describe how your child would solve the situation without asking your child's opinion.

Also, please briefly describe how you would help the two characters in the story solve the issue.

Hypothetical story:

Jenny and John are happy and content, playing with some toys. Each is playing by her/himself but sitting next to the other. They both reach for the same toy.

Jenny (looks over at John, speaks with emphatic irritation): *I need that toy, John.* (John pulls the toy.)

John (angrily protesting): *HEY, no-oo! I need that toy!*

Jenny (very angry, yells): *I NEED IT! John give it to me!*

John (also very angry, loud, jumping up): *NOOO!! I NEED IT!* (They struggle with the toy).

Jenny & John (both very angry, loud, jumping up, John approaches as if to hit Jenny): *It's mine!!!!!!!*

Jenny & John (so angry, both turning to your child [_____]): *We are SO angry. Please* [_____], *what can we do to STOP feeling so angry?*

Question about child:

Which strategy would your child]_____] suggest to Jenny & John?

- ☐ *Jenny & John should find another toy*
- ☐ *Jenny should grab the toy from John*
- ☐ *John should hit Jenny to get the toy*
- ☐ *Jenny & John should share the toy*
- ☐ *Other*_____

Question about parent:

If you were John & Jenny's parent, how would you respond to this situation? Please briefly describe in the lines provided below how you would help them solve the situation.

John & Jenny shout out *"I'm telling Mom/dad. MOOOOM/DAAAAD!!"*
Mom/Dad (enters): *You two STOP being so angry!*

_____
_____
_____
_____

EDUCATOR BEHAVIOUR CHECKLIST
Adapted from Goldstein and McGinnis (1997)

Educator name: _____

Student Name: _____

Almost never=1
Seldom=2
Sometimes=3
Often=4
Almost always=5

Behaviours:

	Almost never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
Appropriate language	1	2	3	4	5
Ignores distractions	1	2	3	4	5
Participates in lesson	1	2	3	4	5
Co-operative with peers	1	2	3	4	5
Plays approp. with objects	1	2	3	4	5
Likes fair play	1	2	3	4	5
Follows teacher rules	1	2	3	4	5
Accepts rules of the class	1	2	3	4	5
Avoids trouble e.g., apologizes	1	2	3	4	5
Shows self-control	1	2	3	4	5
Waits for turn	1	2	3	4	5
Shares with others	1	2	3	4	5
Listens to others	1	2	3	4	5
Helps others	1	2	3	4	5
Joins in games/activities	1	2	3	4	5
Expresses feelings	1	2	3	4	5
Recognizes others' feelings	1	2	3	4	5
Respects others and property	1	2	3	4	5

THANK YOU

OBSERVER CHECKLIST: FREQUENCY SAMPLING TABLE
Adapted from Gober (2002); and McAfee & Leong (2002)

| Observer: |
| Date: |

Positive Behaviour:	Beginning of class 4:05-4:15pm	Middle of class 4:25-4:35pm	End of class 4:45-4:55pm
Appropriate language			
Appropriate movement			
Gentle with objects			
Waits for turn			

Negative Behaviour:	Beginning of class 4:05-4:15pm	Middle of class 4:25-4:35pm	End of class 4:45-4:55pm
Inappropriate language			
Inappropriate movement			
Violent with objects			
Does not wait for turn			

1. **Appropriate language** (e.g., compliments others, apologizes, shares ideas, asks questions)
≠ **Inappropriate language** (e.g., foul language, shouts, doesn't answer to others)

2. **Appropriate movement** (e.g., gives, shares, helps, shows)
≠ **Inapropriate movement** (e.g., hits, pushes, pulls,snatches objects, pushes to get turn, leaves group)

3. **Gentle with objects** (e.g., plays approp. with materials, not possessive)
≠ **Violent with objects** (e.g., throws, breaks materials)

4. **Waits for turn** (e.g., raises hand and waits to be called)
≠ **Does not wait for turn** (e.g., calls out without raising hand/or with hand raised, interrupts others (verbal)

LESSON PLAN
(Ten workshop sessions)

Class Rules:

- We sit on the magic carpet in a circle

- We use soft touch

- We use walking feet

- We take turns

- We respect others

- ...(children will choose one rule)

- The 'feelings thermometer' will be introduced to the class where at every session, children will change the thermometer scale as to how they are feeling. During the class, if a child is hurt or sad, they can go to the thermometer and change the scale.

WEEK 1: Expression of feelings:

Express feelings, care for others, control negative feelings, understand other's feelings.

- Children say jokes to start with a happy mood

- Story about feelings: "The tear soup". Sometimes it's ok to cry, you can feel better later: A chef makes a soup with her tears by thinking of all the things that make her sad (e.g., I'm sad when my ice cream melts, or when the dog barks at me or when I fall and hurt my knee; children can join in by saying things that make them sad). After she says all the things that make her sad and the tear soup is ready, she pours herself a bowl of the soup and enjoys eating it.

- "The happy pie": Same story as above but makes the pie with laughter of things that make the chef happy. (e.g., I'm happy when I go to the park, or when my

friend shares her new toy with me, or when the teacher says what a good girls I am; children can join in by saying things that make them happy).

- Discussion: Talk about feelings by showing pictures of children with different feelings (e.g., sad, happy, and angry).

- Game: Match pictures with feelings-puzzle game of face (happy-smiles).

- Game: Running from A to B (e.g., who is happy when...).

- Game: Dice with pictures of faces with different feelings. Throw dice and act feeling.

- Role-play: Students will perform different feelings and the class will participate by giving suggestions (e.g., angry: frowns, eye-brows-crossed)

- Activity: What would you do? (e.g., Why children might feel that way (e.g go to the amusement park, toy broken, friend does not share game, if friend broke toy...etc.)

WEEK 2: Friendship:

Make and maintain friendships, respect others, accept others as they are, show you care, be patient, share, trade and take turns, support friends.

- Story about friendship: "The friendless dog". A dog is newly adopted by a family and he wants to make friends with the neighbours' cat, hamster and bird. But none of them want to be his friend and they ignore him and won't play with him. One day, they find an old boat and decide to go on a ride in the river, but they later see that there is a hole in the boat and they start sinking, the birds wings become wet and cant' fly and the cat and hamster can't swim. The dog sees what is happening and gets a branch in his mouth and swims to rescue them. He gives the branch to them to hold on to and he takes them to the shore. The bird, cat and hamster are grateful to the dog for saving their life and say to him "A friend in need is a friend indeed, you were there for us when we needed you and this is what real friends are for. We would love you to be our new friend"

- Children will talk about their friends and what they like to do together

- Act out story

- Sharing: mirror game: pair up and do exactly what other student does. Teach that even though two people may want to play with the same toy, they have to share. (e.g., I'd like to share, would you like to share?).

- Game: Blind folding game: friends help guide each other

- Game: One child goes out from the room and the children choose one person to hide under the blanket. When the child returns, he has to guess who that child is. In this way children will learn more about the others in the group.

- Game: Ball game-hot potato...help friends keep ball in air...not to hurt hands (friendship)

- Game: Tie children's legs together and have to run in pairs from one side of the room to the other. In this way, children will feel closer to each other.

- What is fair game: 2 chocolates-2 children...(short story about truck-pull-broke-no one gets to play with it...children discuss personal stories)

WEEK 3: Team Work:

Team spirit, helping others, sharing ideas, follow rules, respect.

- Story about team work: "William the winner or loser?" This story is about William who played hockey and wanted to play by himself and never work with his friends to win a match. He wanted to win very badly so he was mean to other children and he pushed and hurt others and was never fair. One day, when the big game was approaching, the other team members decided not to pick him because he was selfish and did not care about being part of a team and enjoying the game but only to win the game. Then William realizes that playing hockey was not only about winning but it was about sharing, working as a team and playing fairly.

- Physical activities: To enhance the use of energy in a positive way and to relax children

- Game: Hockey: playing by the rules and cheering your friends

- Game: Musical chairs (those who find a chair, help others who don't have a chair to sit on their chairs)

- Relay race: fireman/policeman clothes: friends have to help 2 children get dressed in costumes and bring to them all materials.

- Team work: Play games as a team, e.g., cubes-build castle (with music). Share ideas, try different ways etc.

WEEK 4: Helpfulness:

Help, listen to others, give advice, learn to love the world, be generous, kind, respectful to others.

- Story about helping others: "Animals in a shelter". A shelter advertizes that they have free dogs; the children go to the shelter and choose a dog each. After they bring them home, they decide to have a party for them and they each buy a gift for their new dogs. Ask children what they decide to buy as a gift and why. They learn about helping others and wanting to make them happy. They also learn to love others and be kind to them.

- Doggy the puppet visits the class...children help him find his things, e.g., food, bed, etc.

- Car racing: Work as a team to build car (cardboard, wheels, steering, accessories provided for them-stick them on the cardboard); friends push car while one child sits in it

- Game: Two groups. Plastic cups must be put on the head of one member and the others help support them on head until reaches the end of the class.

- Book about helping others...the monkey who wanted to fly...have you helped your friends? Personal stories

- Game: Children's choice: Duck duck goose with a snowman

<u>WEEK 5: Patience:</u>

<u>Enhance understanding of waiting for turn and giving others a chance to have a turn, enhance motivation of completion of tasks and responsibilities, feelings of accomplishment and effort.</u>

- Story about Patience: "The red flowers": Two sisters, Jill and Jenny, were given two plants by their family that were supposed to give out beautiful red flowers. They both planted them in their garden and everyday they start watering their plants. When Jill saw that she was watering her plant for one week and no flowers were blooming, she became very angry and impatient and she stepped on her plant and decided to forget about it. Her sister Jenny though, was patient and she kept watering her plant every day. One month passes and when she went out to water her plant again, she was surprised to see a beautiful red flower on one of the plant branches. She calls all her family to come and see how beautiful her first flower looked on the plant and how she was proud to be patient and keep watering her plant. Her sister, Jill looked at the pretty flower and felt guilty for not being patient and wait for her plant to blossom like her sister's did. Next to her sister's beautiful flower, laid her smashed and stepped on plant which could have become a beautiful flower if she were patient.

- Children role play the story

- Craft session, children make a group project together:

- Game: running game: children will stand in two straight lines and the first child has to run till the end of the room and return tapping the second child to run. (Tunnel, cones, change santa and elf hats). In this way, children will learn to be patient, wait for their turn and support their peers when it is their turn.

- Game: Pass the parcel. Wait for turn to come, some may win prize and some may not. Follow the music rhythm.

- Game: The fish ride: The children will be divided in two teams. Need newspaper and paper fish. Children have to swing their newspaper and swap until fish swims from one side of the room to the other.

WEEK 6: Kindness:

Learn to be kind to others, smile to them, complement others, show them they care, accept and respect others for who they are.

- Story about kindness: "The squirrel to the rescue". This story is about a squirrel who rushed out with a bag to collect food for his family as a storm was coming. On his way he saw a turtle fallen on his back and no one helped him as they wanted to go home before the storm. He helps him turn; then he sees a rabbit stuck in a hole, he pulls him out, then he sees a bird whose bag was ripped and the food had flown away, he helps the bird collect the food; then he sees a baby mouse stuck on a tree, so he climbs and brings him down. When the squirrel reaches home, he sees that his back was ripped too when he climbed the tree to save the baby mouse and all the food he had collected had fallen from his back. He had no food to give to his family and the storm was coming. To his surprise, he hears the knock on the door and to his surprise all the animals he was kind to and helped were at his door each bringing something from their food collection. They said to him "You were kind to us and helped us when we needed you and now it's our turn to be kind to you and your family".

- Act out story

- Squirrel puppet visits class

- Differences and similarities: finger animal puppets will be given to children e.g., bird and rabbit. Two children will come to the middle of the circle and hold the cards and say what they like about the other animal e.g., bird: It has beautiful colours and beautiful sound; rabbit; It has strong teeth and soft fur.

- Activity: Children will sit in a circle and one by one they will give a compliment about the person sitting next to them e.g., I like what you are wearing, I like your hair, I like that you share your toys.

- Game: Make others smile: pairs stare at each other until one of them smiles. They have to continue until both smile.

- Game: ball game: in straight line: quiz questions: something kind and something rude. Should not touch ball if comments are rude "e.g., I don't want to be your friend vs. I want to be your friend". Children take one step forward at correct response.

- Doctor game: Find cure for "kindness": Children given doctor outfits and tools: they say a kind thing and we put it in the medicine.

WEEK 7: Trust:

Learn to trust their friends and support each other. Also guide and comfort them when they need assistance and be loyal to them

- Story about trust: "The lost purse": A brother and a sister, wanted to buy a special gift for their mother on mother's day. They had saved their allowance money for a month so that they could afford to buy her a beautiful gift to say how much they loved her. One day they were passing by a jewellery store where they saw a beautiful set of shiny earrings and both decided that they would look perfect on her and that she would love them. They hurried into the store and asked for that earring set, but realized that they were short of money. They were very sad and decided to leave the store. On their way out, they saw an old lady who was also leaving the store drop her purse on the ground. They quickly picked it up and ran after the old lady to return it to her. When they returned the purse to the old lady, she was so happy that they were honest children and they could be trusted that's why they did not steal money from her purse. So she decided to reward them. She opened her purse and said "Because you are honest children and can be trusted with a stranger's purse, I will give you $10 as a reward. Thank you". Do you know what this meant? That they could finally afford to buy their mother the beautiful set of earrings and on top of that, they could each buy an ice-cream cone too.

- Act out story

- Discuss how important trusting others is. Give hypothetical stories of how children can support each other e.g., one child wanted to go to the bathroom so he gave his friend his favourite action man to keep until he retuned. When he came back, his friend didn't have it anymore. How do you think you would feel if you could not trust your friends?

- Game: Blind fold one child and others must give him directions/guide him to the nearest exit....in construction site..put tools around classroom

- Activity: what would you do if.... (e.g., your friend is crying because he fell and hurt himself; your friend was not invited to a birthday party; your friend lost his snack pack)

- Game: Cold-hot (children will be paired, five items will be hidden, one of the paired children will know where it is and will guide their partner by saying hot and cold until they find the hidden item).

- Cat and mouse game with an elastic band: mouse has to trust the children to save him from the cat by letting him in the circle but not letting the cat get inside.

- Game: From 10 children, 9 choose to be an animal. The animals will help the child find the hidden object by making the animal sounds (e.g., baaa, moooo). In this way, the child will trust his animals to guide him find his sweets. The sweets can be divided among all the children.

WEEK 8: Generosity:

Learn about charity, giving and sharing, also to want to make others happy

- Story about sharing: "The Beary bear": A bear is given a box of chocolates from his mother for being such a sweet bear. When he takes the box to school all his friends approach him one by one and ask for a chocolate bar. Beary bear gives them each one happily. At the end he realises that he has none left for himself. His teacher sees what happens and calls to tell his mother. When beary bear goes back home, he sees a new chocolate box on his bed, because he was so sweet to give his friends all his chocolates and was not selfish to eat them all by himself. He was sharing with others so his mother rewarded him with another box of chocolates.

- Act out story

- Children discuss how they have helped others

- Guessing game: act out what he is doing to help someone. Children choose ideas

- Help a poor family: pass the food (pasta, beans, corn, etc.-put in basket)

- Game: Children have to share bag/rack to hop from one side of the room to the other.

- Game: Children will be given 9 items. Then they will choose what to give to the story characters I will read to them. In this way they will understand what charity is about and how they can help others in need (e.g., Jim and Andrea went to buy an ice-cream cone, when Jim realized that he had lost his $1. How could we help Jim if we were there? The child with money runs to help him.

- Give teddy bears: children have to find someone to give them the bears to make them feel happy

EDUCATOR POSTERS
(Original posters are A3 size cards with animations and colours)

Please read the below story to the children and ask them the following questions to examine if they remember the order of the story.

POSTERS:

WEEK 1: Expression of feelings:

Story about feelings:

- "The tear soup". Sometimes it's ok to cry, you can feel better later: A chef makes a soup with her tears by thinking of all the things that make her sad (e.g., I'm sad when my ice cream melts, or when the dog barks at me or when I fall and hurt my knee; children can join in by saying things that make them sad). After she says all the things that makes her sad and the tear soup is ready, she pours herself a bowl of the soup and enjoys eating it.

- "The happy pie": Same story as above but makes the pie with laughter of things that make the chef happy. (e.g., I'm happy when I go to the park, or when my friend shares her new toy with me, or when the teacher says what a good girls I am; children can join in by saying things that make them happy).

    → What makes you sad?

    → What makes you happy?

WEEK 2: Friendship:

- Story about friendship: "The friendless dog". A dog is newly adopted by a family and he wants to make friends with the neighbours' cat, hamster and bird. But none of them want to be his friend and they ignore him and won't play with him. One day, they find an old boat and decide to go on a ride in the river, but they later see that there is a hole in the boat and they start sinking, the birds wings become wet and cant' fly and the cat and hamster can't swim. The dog sees what is happening and gets a branch in his mouth and swims to rescue them. He gives the branch to them to hold on to and he takes them to the shore. The bird, cat and hamster are grateful to the dog for saving their life and say to him "A friend in need is a friend indeed, you were there for us when we needed you and this is what real friends are for. We would love you to be our new friend".

    → What did the cat, bird and hamster do that put them in danger?

    → What did the dog take with him to save the animals?

→ Why did the cat, bird and hamster become the dog's friends?

WEEK 3: Team-work:

- Story about team work: "William the winner or loser?" This story is about William who played hockey and wanted to play by himself and never work with his friends to win a match. He wanted to win very badly so he was mean to other children and he pushed and hurt others and was never fair. One day, when the big game was approaching, the other team members decided not to pick him because he was selfish and did not care about being part of a team and enjoying the game but only to win the game. Then William realizes that playing hockey was not only about winning but it was about sharing, working as a team and playing fairly.

    → What was William doing so that he could win the game?

    → Why did the children not want William in their team?

WEEK 4: Helpfulness:

- Story about helping others: "Animals in a shelter". A shelter advertizes that they have free dogs; the children go to the shelter and choose a dog each. After they bring them home, they decide to have a party for them and they each buy a gift for their new dogs. Ask children what they decide to buy as a gift and why. They learn about helping others and wanting to make them happy. They also learn to love others and be kind to them.

    → Why did the children go to the shelter?

    → Why did they decide to have a party for the dogs?

WEEK 5: Patience:

- Story about patience: "The red flower": Two sisters, Jill and Jenny, were given two plants by their family that were supposed to give out beautiful red flowers. They both planted them in their garden and everyday they started watering their plants. When Jill saw that she was watering her plant for one week and no flowers were blooming, she became very angry and impatient and she stepped on her plant and decided to forget about it. Her sister Jenny though, was patient and she kept watering her plant every day. One month passes and when she went out to water her plant again, she was surprised to see a beautiful red flower on one of the plant branches. She calls all her family to come and see how beautiful her first flower looked on the plant and how she was proud to be patient and keep watering her plant. Her sister, Jill looked at the pretty flower and felt guilty for

not being patient and wait for her plant to blossom like her sister's did. Next to her sister's beautiful flower, laid her smashed and stepped on plant which could have become a beautiful flower if she were patient.

→ What was going to happen when Jill and Jenny watered their plants everyday?

→ Why did Jill step on her plant?

WEEK 6: Kindness:

- Story about kindness: "The squirrel to the rescue". This story is about a squirrel who rushed out with a bag to gather food for his family as a storm was coming. On his way he saw a turtle fallen on his back and no one helped his as they wanted to go home before the storm. He helps him turn; then he sees a rabbit stuck in a hole, he pulls him out, then he sees a bird whose bag was ripped and the food had flown away, he helps the bird gather the food; then he sees a baby mouse stuck on a tree, so he climbs and brings him down. When the squirrel reaches home, he sees that his back was ripped too when he climbed the tree to save the baby mouse and all the food he had gathered had fallen from his back. He had no food to give to his family and the storm was coming. To his surprise, he hears the knock on the door and to his surprise all the animals he was kind to and helped were at his door each bringing something from their food gathering. They said to him "You were kind to us and helped us when we needed you and now it's our turn to be kind to you and your family".
    → Why were all the animals gathering food?

    → Why did the animals bring food to the squirrel's home?

WEEK 7: Trust:

- Story about trust: "The lost purse": A brother and a sister, wanted to buy a special gift for their mother on mother's day. They had saved their allowance money for a month so that they could afford to buy her a beautiful gift to say how much they loved her. One day they were passing by a jewellery store where they saw a beautiful set of shiny earrings and both decided that they would look perfect on her and that she would love them. They hurried into the store and asked for that earring set, but realized that they were short of money. They were very sad and decided to leave the store. On their way out, they saw an old lady who was also leaving the store drop her purse on the ground. They quickly picked it up and ran after the old lady to return it to her. When they returned the purse to the

old lady, she was so happy that they were honest children and they could be trusted that's why they did not steal money from her purse. So she decided to reward them. She opened her purse and said "Because you are honest children and can be trusted with a stranger's purse, I will give you $10 as a reward. Thank you". Do you know what this meant? That they could finally afford to buy their mother the beautiful set of earrings and on top of that, they could each buy an ice-cream cone too.

→ Why did the brother and sister want to by their mother a set of earrings?

→ What did they do when they saw the purse on the ground?

→ Why did the old lady give them $10?

WEEK 8: Generosity:

- Story about sharing: 'The Beary bear": A bear is given a box of chocolates from his mother for being such a sweet bear. When he takes the box to school all his friends approach him one by one and ask for a chocolate bar. (The foxy fox, the catty cat, the ducky duck etc.). Beary bear gives them each one chocolate bar happily. At the end he realises that he has none left for himself. His teacher sees what happens and calls to tell his mother. When beary bear goes back home, he sees a new chocolate box on his bed, because he was so sweet to give his friends all his chocolates and was not selfish to eat them all by himself. He was sharing with others so his mother rewarded him with another box of chocolates.

→ What were Beary bear's friends asking him to do?

→ Why did Beary bear's mother buy him another chocolate box?

EDUCATOR EVALUATION FORM

Thank you for conducting the activities with your child during the workshop sessions

The following questions are designed to examine your views and opinions about the effectiveness of the 'Poster activities' which were aimed to reinforce children's weekly learnt skills of the social skill's workshop in the school environment.

- o Did you find the Poster activities useful for your class setting?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other_____

- o Did they match with your program's activities?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other_____

- o Did children enjoy participating in the Poster activities?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other_____

- o Did you notice any difference in children's behaviour when participating in the Poster activities?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other_____

- o Would you continue using similar activities in your class setting in the future?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other_____

Notes/comments:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME & COOPERATION

TAKE HOME PARENT ACTIVITY HANDOUTS

After reading the below story to your child, ask your child to draw what comes to his/her mind when listening to the story. In this way children will conceptualize the story and internalize the values learnt from the story.

WEEK 1: Expression of feelings:

Story about feelings:

- "Story about feelings: "The tear soup". Sometimes it's ok to cry, you can feel better later: A chef makes a soup with her tears by thinking of all the things that make her sad (e.g., I'm sad when my ice cream melts, or when the dog barks at me or when I fall and hurt my knee; children can join in by saying things that make them sad). After she says all the things that makes her sad and the tear soup is ready, she pours herself a bowl of the soup and enjoys eating it.

- "The happy pie": Same story as above but makes the pie with laughter of things that make the chef happy. (e.g., I'm happy when I go to the park, or when my friend shares her new toy with me, or when the teacher says what a good girls I am; children can join in by saying things that make them happy).
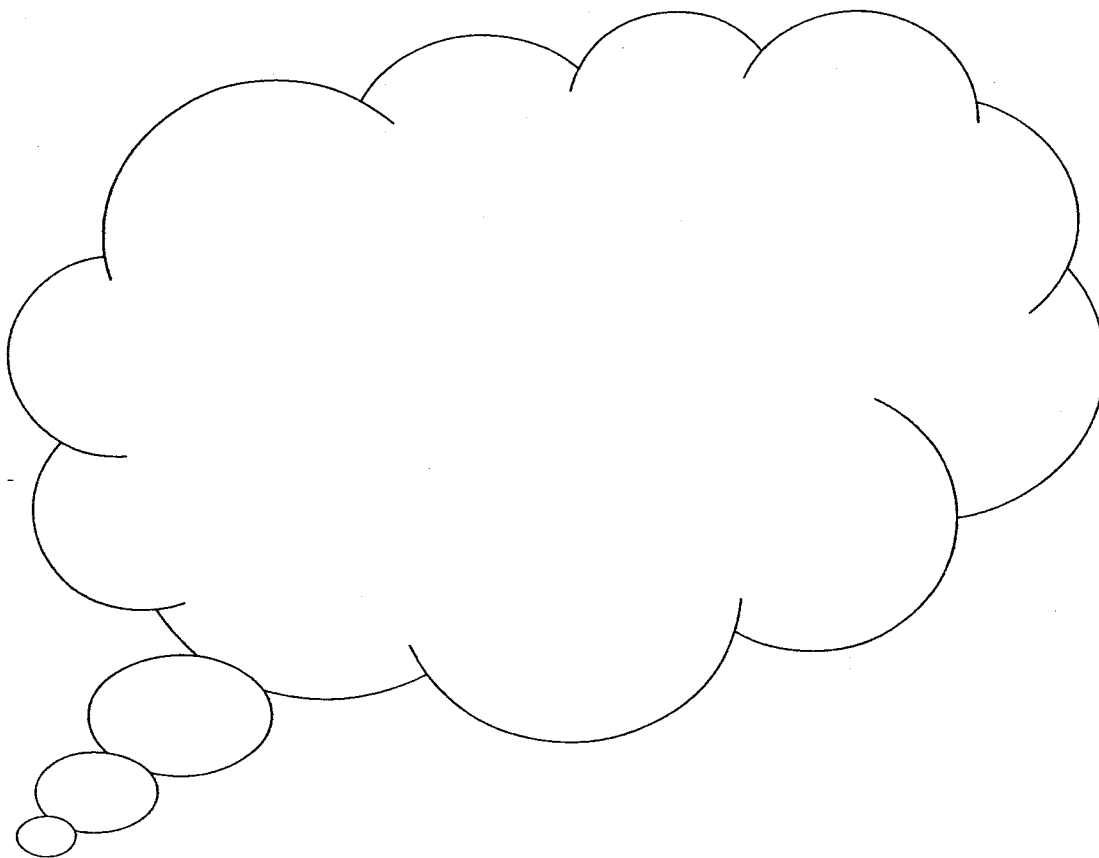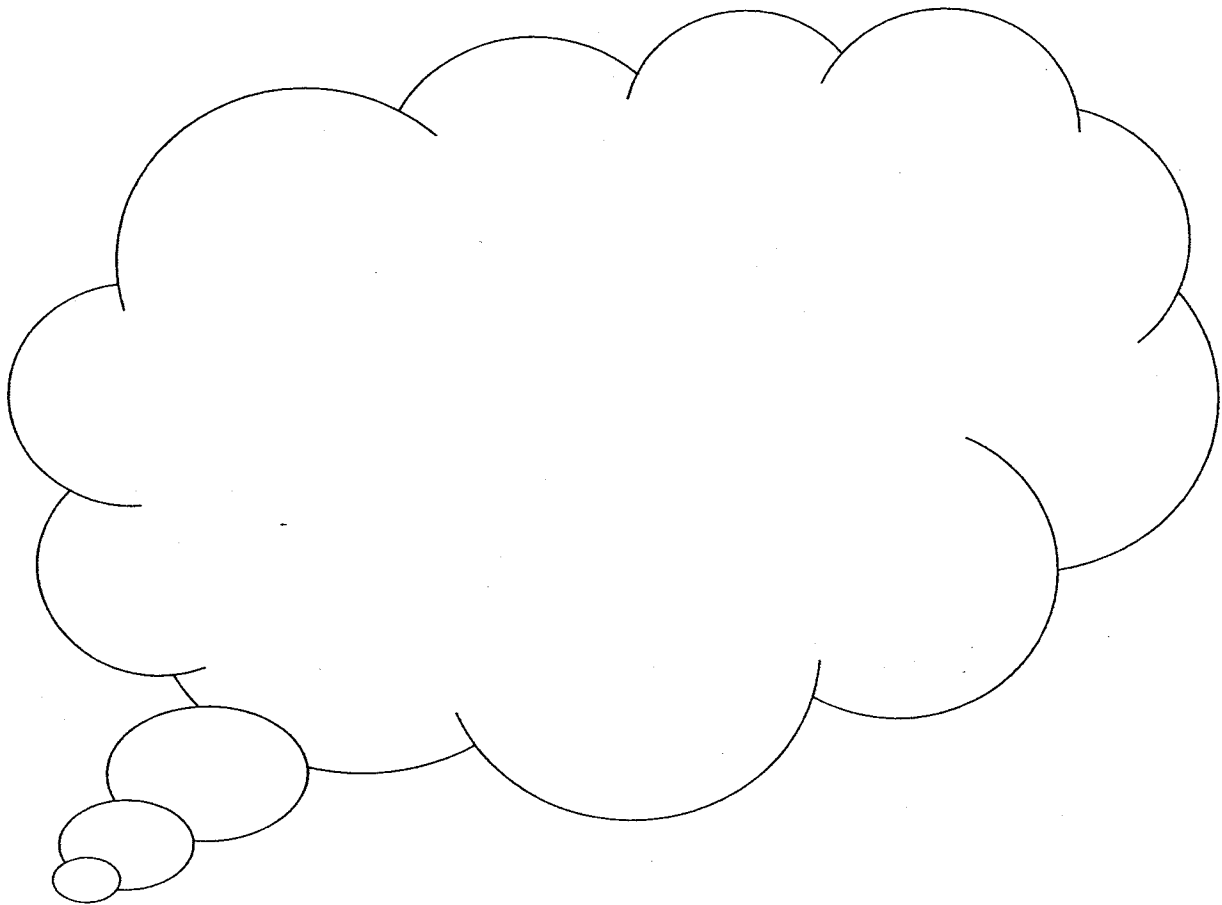
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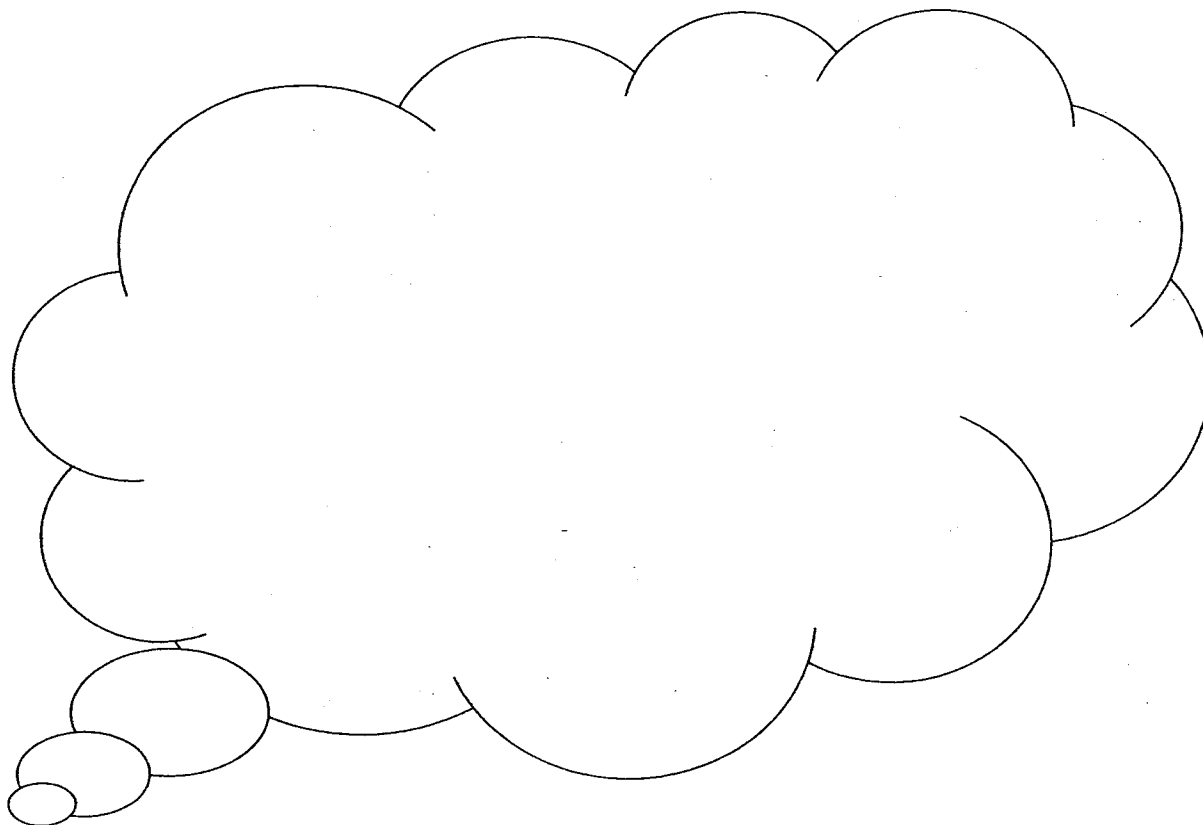
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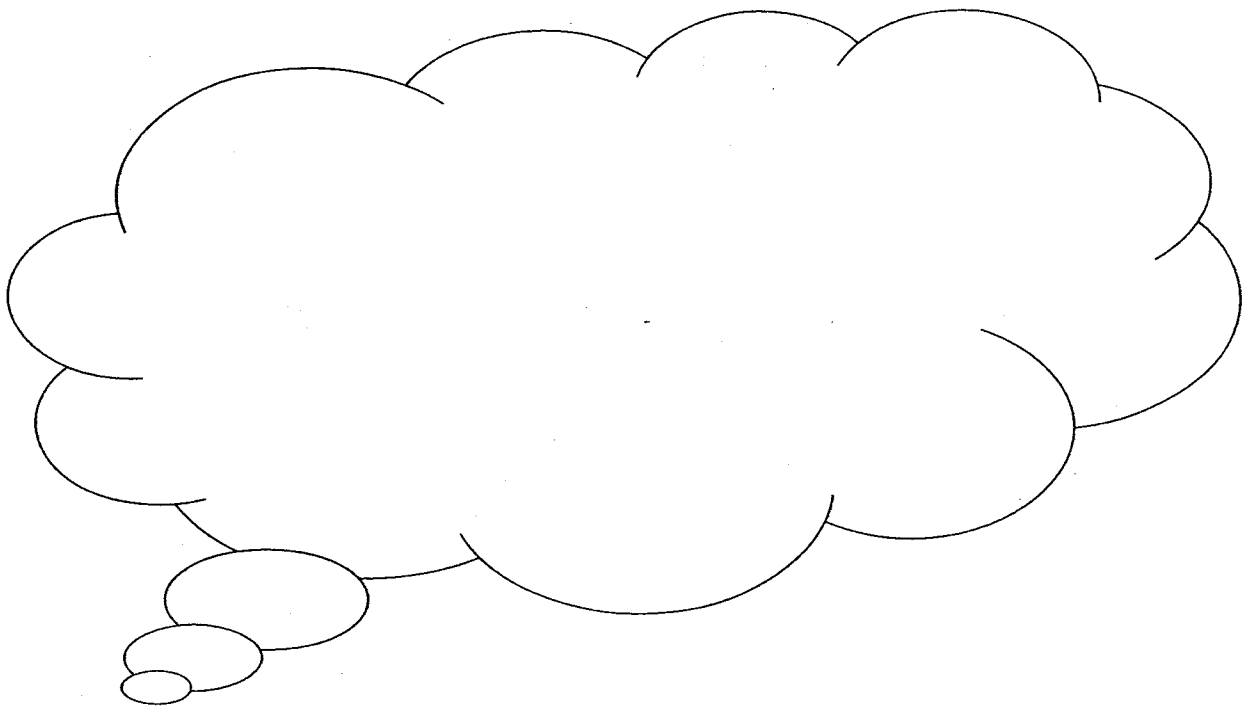
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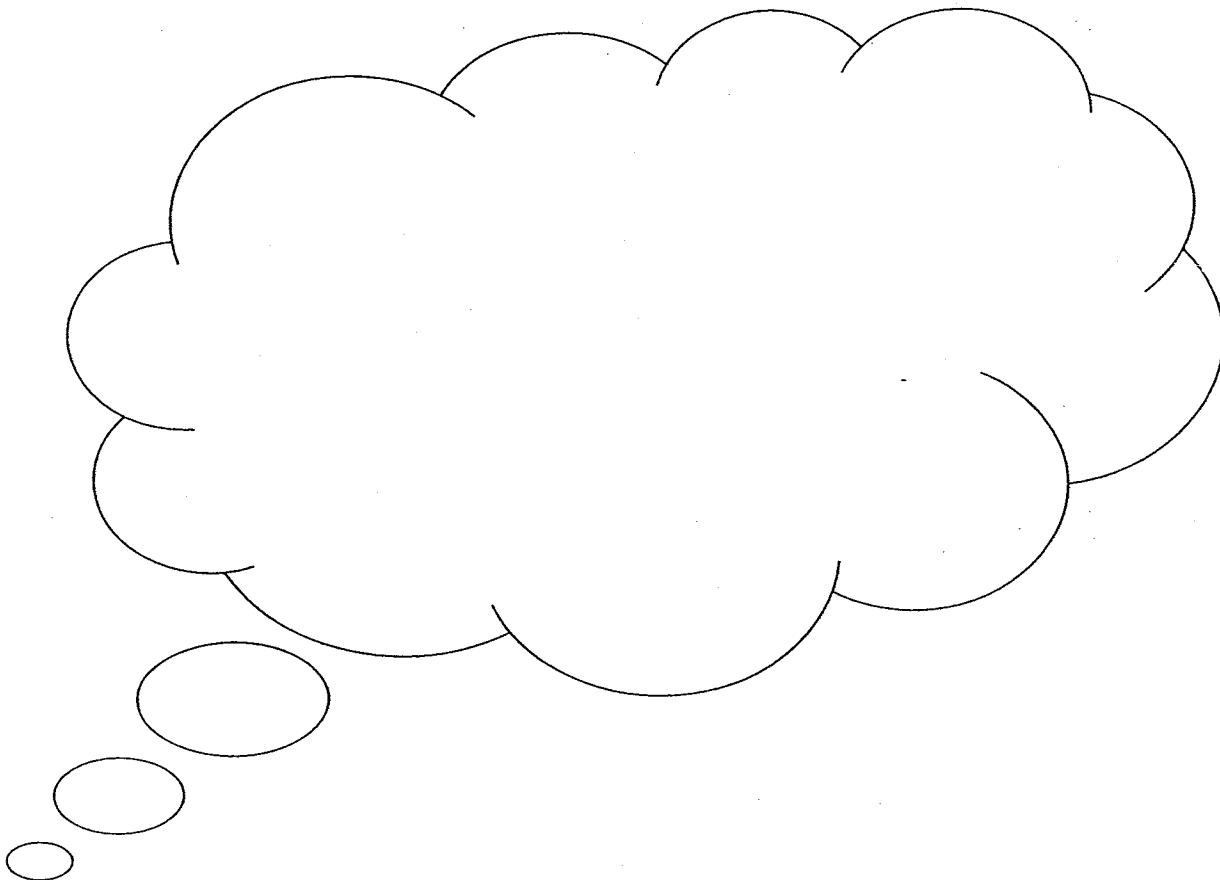
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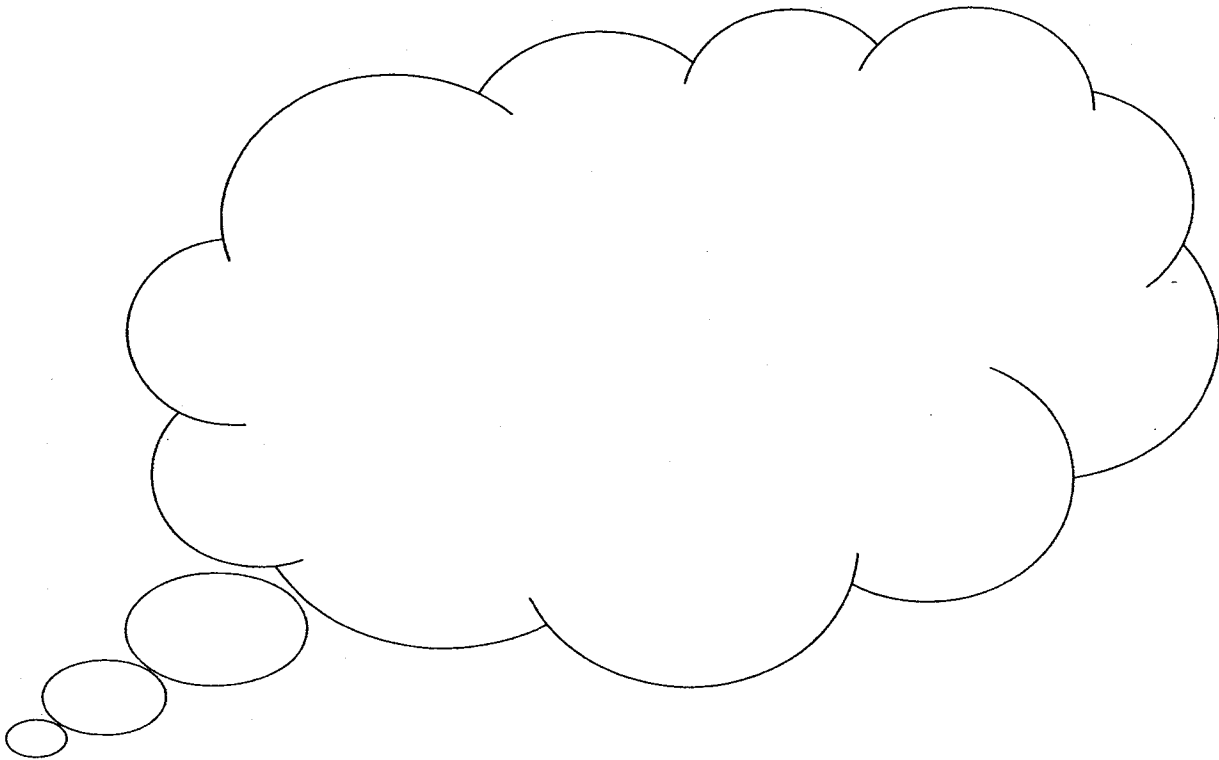
TAKE HOME PARENT ACTIVITY HANDOUT

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WEEK 7: Trust:

- Story about trust: "The lost purse": A brother and a sister, wanted to buy a special gift for their mother on mother's day. They had saved their allowance money for a month so that they could afford to buy her a beautiful gift to say how much they loved her. One day they were passing by a jewellery store where they saw a beautiful set of shiny earrings and both decided that they would look perfect on her and that she would love them. They hurried into the store and asked for that earring set, but realized that they were short of money. They were very sad and decided to leave the store. On their way out, they saw an old lady who was also leaving the store drop her purse on the ground. They quickly picked it up and ran after the old lady to return it to her. When they returned the purse to the old lady, she was so happy that they were honest children and they could be trusted that's why they did not steal money from her purse. So she decided to reward them. She opened her purse and said "Because you are honest children and can be trusted with a stranger's purse, I will give you $10 as a reward. Thank you". Do you know what this meant? That they could finally afford to buy their mother the beautiful set of earrings and on top of that, they could each buy an ice-cream cone too.
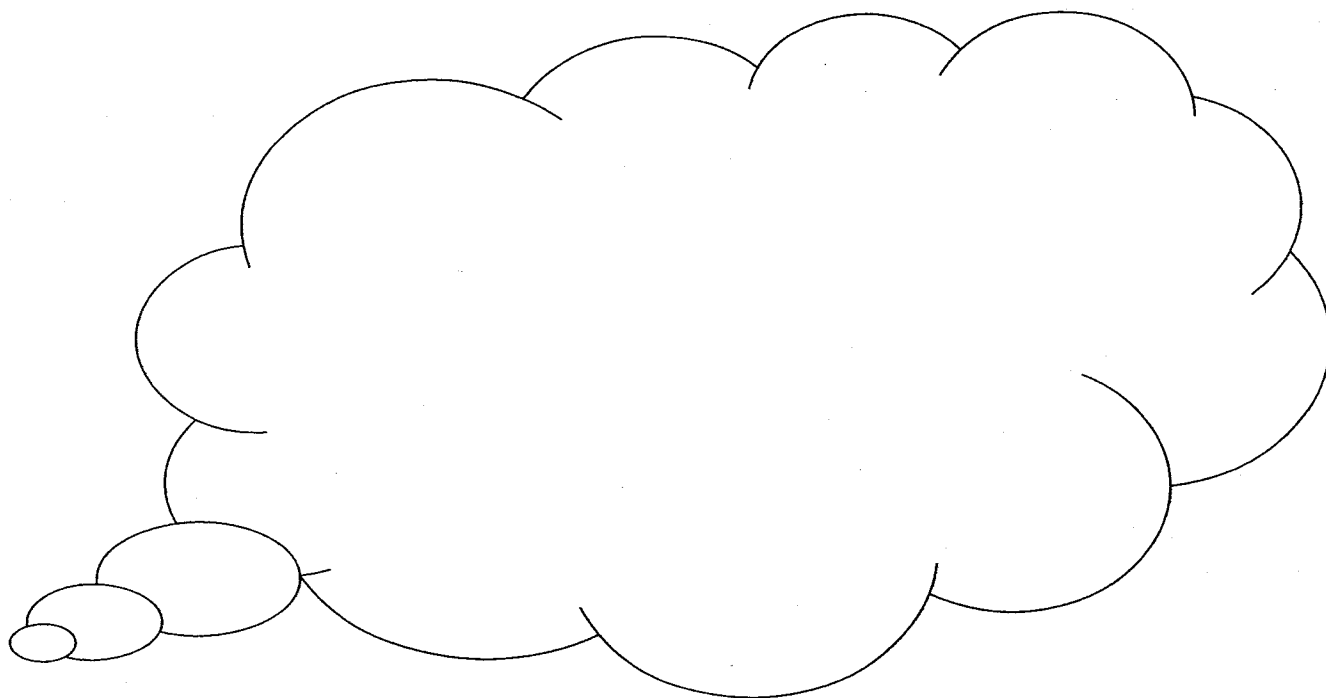
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After reading the below story to your child, ask your child to draw what comes to his/her mind when listening to the story. In this way children will conceptualize the story and internalize the values learnt from the story.

WEEK 8: Generosity:

- Story about sharing: 'The Beary bear": A bear is given a box of chocolates from his mother for being such a sweet bear. When he takes the box to school all his friends approach him one by one and ask for a chocolate bar. Beary bear gives them each one happily. At the end he realises that he has none left for himself. His teacher sees what happens and calls to tell his mother. When beary bear goes back home, he sees a new chocolate box on his bed, because he was so sweet to give his friends all his chocolates and was not selfish to eat them all by himself. He was sharing with others so his mother rewarded him with another box of chocolates.

PARENT EVALUATION FORM

Thank you for conducting the activities with your child during the workshop sessions

The following questions are designed to examine your views and opinions about the effectiveness of the '*Take home parent activity handouts*' which were aimed to reinforce children's weekly learnt skills of the social skill's workshop in the home environment.

- o Did you find the activities useful for your home setting?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other_____

- o Did it match with your lifestyle?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other_____

- o Did your child enjoy participating in the activities?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other_____

- o Did you notice any difference of behaviour in your child while participating in the activities?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other_____

- o Would you continue using similar activities in your home setting in the future?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Other_____

Notes/comments:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME & COOPERATION

CHILD CERTIFICATE

A certificate of Thanks and Recognition,

This certifies that _____ participated with great

motivation in the Social and Ethical skills workshop of Mariam Khatchadourian,

M.A student at Concordia University, and is hereby awarded this certificate of

merit.

2009-2010

_____

Mariam Khatchadourian

Concordia

Department of Education
LB-579
Sir George Williams Campus

To: **Mariam Khatchadourian, M.A. Child Study**

From: **Richard Schmid, Chair**

Date: **October 6, 2009**

Re.: **The value of values: The influence of a social skills program on children's social behaviour, affective perspective-taking and empathy skills**

This letter is to inform you that your proposal had successfully passed the scrutiny of the Department's Ethics Committee and has been accepted.

We take this opportunity to wish you every success with this project.