

Summary of the Use of CosmoKidz in
Kindergarten Through Second Grade Classes
Oracle, Arizona
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Introduction

The Kettering Foundation's¹ primary question is, "What does it take to make democracy work as it should?" Within this broad question are sub-categories that seek to understand what people can do collectively to address problems affecting their lives, their communities, and their nation. In addressing these questions, the target population has traditionally been adults, although there has been some research focusing on high-school and middle-school student populations.

The research that this summary addresses begins at a much younger age; the target population is kindergarten through second-grade students. The rationale for focusing on young children who are just beginning their formal education is that they, too, are part of social worlds that affect them and the school communities of which they are a part. They are also contributing to "making" those social worlds... and they are developing "habits" and "ways of being" that are mostly out of awareness but, nonetheless, affect the kinds of citizens they are and will become.

Good citizenship involves analytical and relational skill sets. In a report for the Kettering Foundation entitled *The Enduring Effects of National Issues Forums on High School Students*, Doble and colleagues assert that, "In order to become active, public citizens in a democratic society, young people need to acquire fundamental *public knowledge*, develop their *public skills* and internalize certain *public attitudes*."² Two broad categories emerge from the three areas that Doble and colleagues describe. One category involves the analytical skills of thinking, framing, weighing, and categorizing ideas and issues. The second category comprises relational skills like deep listening, taking seriously the perspectives and views of others (empathizing), expressing oneself in ways that are useful for the group (productive agency),

¹ This research is being done in cooperation with the Kettering Foundation.

² Doble, J., Peng, I., Frank, T. and Salim, D. (1999). *The enduring effects of national issues forums (NIF) on high school students*. A report to the Kettering Foundation.

and recognizing who is not in the room and attempting to include their voices (compassion).

Both of these categories are essential; an effective and engaged citizenry cannot function for the common good without them. Nineteenth Century philosopher John Dewey agreed. He believed that education should not be primarily about teaching a trade but rather teaching habits of mind that help children take in information and stay open to change (the more analytical abilities of choicework; of weighing options and thinking critically) and to work interdependently with others (the more relational skill sets). Dewey believed that these are essential skills for a robust democracy.³

My experience of working in higher education for 27 years has led me to the conclusion that analytical skills are taught and privileged much more than the “softer” communication/relational/emotional intelligence skills. Relational abilities are difficult (it’s hard to listen deeply and to take seriously those with opposing values)... they are developed over time...and one needs to practice them over and over again. Our current educational system is comprised of teaching academic competencies that leave little room, space, or time for relational competencies. Furthermore, many adults have not developed these competencies. We live in a culture that “looks through” communication rather than “looking at it” and, consequently, there are not many contexts in which children or adults are learning these essential social skills.

CosmoKidz is an attempt to help develop these crucial relational skills in young children by providing opportunities, in brief increments, for them to talk about their social worlds in a particular way. As adults, our social worlds consist of issues such as climate change, social injustices, and land use. Children’s social worlds are different but just as important to them as land use, for example, is to us. They are experiencing the complex social worlds of sharing, teasing, bullying, making new friends, and feeling left out. These are the conversations that the activities in CosmoKidz provide for young children to explore together. The ways in which children deal with the issues in their social worlds have implications for how they will handle issues as adults and the kind of citizens they will become.

This research project began in the Spring semester of 2014 at Mountain Vista School in Oracle, Arizona. One kindergarten, one first-grade, and one second-grade class were chosen for a pilot study. The results of this pilot were reported to the Kettering Foundation.⁴ We expanded the research

³ Dewey, J. (1916), *Democracy and education*: Macmillan.

⁴ Pearce, K. (2014), *Reflections on a modified deliberation on teasing with kindergarten through second grade students at mountain vista school in oracle, arizona*. A report to the Kettering Foundation.

this year to include two kindergarten, two first-grade and two second-grade classes for an entire academic year. Additionally, the Special Education and pre-school teacher used the CosmoKidz cards and activities to test their effectiveness with these two student populations (I will talk about these two groups at the conclusion of this document).

The teachers were given an initial orientation to the goals and uses of CosmoKidz. I asked the teachers to use CosmoKidz for about 10 minutes most days, if not everyday. I suggested the following as one way to use CosmoKidz:

- Monday, choose a topic for the week. Show the children the illustration and describe the scenario and ask them to comment on the scenario and/or illustration.
- Tuesday: Ask the children questions to help them name their own experience with the topic. The questions in CosmoKidz focus on the child's thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and senses.
- Wednesday: Ask the children questions to help them name how other children (and others in general) may be affected by the situation. The questions in CosmoKidz help children take a "third person perspective" by imagining how other children might think and feel; this helps foster perspective-taking and compassion.
- Thursday and Friday: Ask the children to act out and/or role play what they can do to help make the situation better.
- Use the puppets to help demonstrate certain behaviors that they want the children to focus on (happy and sad emotions based on how the puppets are treating each other).
- Remind the children about SOAR (**S**ense what's around you; **O**pen your hands to help others; **A**ct with kindness; **R**espect other people) and SOARing behavior as opportunities present themselves throughout the day.
- Point out SOARing behavior as they notice it.

I also encouraged them to use the cards and activities in ways that they thought would fit the needs of their particular students. I encouraged them to be creative and add their personal touch to the questions and activities.

I was the sole researcher. During the school year the teachers and I met four times to check-in with one another. I also observed two of the seven teachers using CosmoKidz with their students, I collected and analyzed surveys and questionnaires from parents, students, and the seven teachers, and I conducted three modified deliberations in all kindergarten through second grade classes.

There are five research questions that this summary will address:

1. To what extent has there been carry-over of the SOAR skill set by the children in the k-2 classes who were using CosmoKidz last year in their classroom?
2. How does the use of CosmoKidz over the course of a school year affect children's interpersonal communication skill sets and actions in the classroom?
3. How does the use of CosmoKidz over the course of a school year affect children's interpersonal communication skill sets and actions across contexts (on the playground and at home)?
4. In what ways does the use of CosmoKidz carry-over into a deliberative context? What communication skill sets are apparent as children deliberate topics related to their social world?
5. What are the deliberative and communication skill sets that children are exhibiting in the first modified deliberation? How do these skills change overtime (as observed in the second and third modified deliberations) as children are using CosmoKidz daily in the classroom?

Summary of the Research Data

Question #1: To what extent has there been carry-over of the SOAR skill set by the children in the k-2 classes who were using CosmoKidz last year in their classroom?

In answering this question, I relied on the observations of teachers and parents. The first- and second-grade teachers were given a list of the students in their class who were in a CosmoKidz class the previous year. They sent home questionnaires to the parents of these children and they also observed how these children were initially interacting with other children in the classroom.

The number of parents who responded was highest for the first-grade students who were in a CosmoKidz kindergarten class (11 parental responses), followed by parents of second-grade students who were in the first-grade CosmoKidz class (6 responses). Only one parent whose child is in third-grade and was in the previous CosmoKidz second-grade class responded.

The eighteen parents that responded indicated there was "carry-over" even though the children were no longer engaged in conversations about CosmoKidz and SOARing behavior. I asked parents if their child mentioned SOAR or SOARing behavior during their Summer break. Twelve parents said "sometimes" while five said "never." In answer to the question about their child pointing out SOARing behavior, eleven parents said "sometimes" while seven said "never." In terms of their child exhibiting SOARing behavior, fourteen parents responded "frequently" or "sometimes" for each category of Sense what's around you; Open your hands to help others; Act

with kindness; and, Respect other people, with only four responses of “never.”

The questionnaire and results can be found in Appendix A.

The first- and second-grade teachers also noticed differences between the students in their class who were and were not exposed to CosmoKidz. The two first-grade teachers said the following when I asked them if they noticed any carry-over from the children who used CosmoKidz the previous year:

“They knew SOAR. About 70% knew what the acronym stood for. About 70-80% of those kids were able to express themselves better. When we began using the cards, they had more in-depth responses. Not so shallow. The kids were about equal in their language and behavior after about 4 months.”

And...

“The kids who had CosmoKidz were automatically wanting to communicate more. They used their words to talk about someone hurting them.”

The two second-grade teachers said the following:

“Kids remembered SOARing behavior. Some remembered the acronym and others only knew about SOAR in general terms. They remembered the cards and would jump in to tell the rest of the class what they remembered. The ones who really enjoyed the program last year were the first to point out good and not so good behavior. They took ownership of their and others’ behavior. They wanted others to be good—for example, they would say, ‘the teacher wants us to be quiet’. I have a child who is currently in my class; she was also in my first-grade class last year, so she has had CosmoKidz for two years. She has a sibling in kindergarten and I hear her telling her sibling to act nice and treat others with respect so she is being a good influence to her younger sister.”

And...

“The more you use something the more it becomes easier and more instilled and stronger for the children. But it takes a few years before noticing a difference. I noticed kids who had used CosmoKidz responding to SOAR more quickly. But there really wasn’t a difference in behaviors. Kids responded to a card that they had the year before by saying that they remembered the card—but the conversations were different and useful. They remembered the illustration and the example more than the conversation they had with their previous class.”

Based on these responses it appears that, overall, the children were able to recall SOAR and point out SOARing behavior. Many of them were also able to express themselves in more nuanced ways. Having said that, it is also apparent that these skills take time and that many of the children “know something” about SOARing behavior but they oftentimes don’t act on what they know. This is a theme that I will continue to come back to throughout this summary.

Question #2: How does the use of CosmoKidz over the course of a school year affect children’s interpersonal communication skill sets and actions in the classroom?

I asked the teachers to fill out an open-ended questionnaire two months into the school year that described the behaviors of the children in their class. The questionnaire asked them to tell me how the children are typically interacting with each other; how they are handling conflicts; how they express and manage their strong emotions; how well they listen to their peers; how well they express their thoughts and feelings; how well they are able to select a course of action that helps create better outcomes for them and others; how often they interact and play with children who are not like them; how often they show empathy and compassion toward other children; how well they are able to solve problems together; and, the approximate percentage of their day that they spend redirecting unwanted behavior.

I followed-up at the end of the year with these same questions as well as an interview to allow us to go more in-depth into the changes over time that they feel confident are due to CosmoKidz.

Kindergarten Classes

One veteran kindergarten teacher told me that this has been the most challenging group of children she has had. She described the children as emotionally and behaviorally challenged with a very high percentage of her day spent redirecting unwanted behavior. She talked about the children getting into arguing and shouting matches, name-calling and using hurtful words, being physically aggressive towards other children, and becoming very emotional having tantrums and “meltdowns.” At the end of the year, I asked her to tell me any connections she saw between the use of CosmoKidz and SOAR and the behavior of the children in her class.

“I believe that CosmoKidz and SOAR really got my kids to THINK more about their actions, behaviors, and choices. It didn’t always cause them to CHANGE their actions, behaviors, and choices, but they could recognize positive behaviors and choices and they could reason and discuss ways in which they could exhibit SOARing behaviors . . . perhaps this is not the desired outcome, however I think that the fact that these children could at least think about ways in which they could

SOAR is huge and these “baby steps” really did in fact make a bit of a difference with this class. I think that this is something that they have stored internally and it will come . . . one day, they will have situations in which they will bring forth this knowledge and truly know how to effectively apply it!”

The second kindergarten teacher had a class that was not nearly as challenging, although she experienced the typical issues that one would expect from five year-olds; difficulty listening, solving problems, expressing themselves in productive ways, and handling strong emotions productively. By the end of the year she observed many students having enough communication skills to identify how someone may be mistreating them and giving “I” messages if someone wasn’t using SOARing behavior. She observed that the students seem to be anticipating that a conversation will happen if someone has felt mistreated. What she isn’t seeing much of is the offending student “staying in the tension” of hearing how his/her behavior has affected another and responding appropriately. She has spent a lot of time coaching the students on how to listen and respond, but, as she says, “it’s a work in progress.”

First-Grade Classes

In the beginning of the year one of the first-grade teachers described the interactions among her students as positive overall. As a group, they seemed to be more mature than most six year-olds. The changes she observed at the end of the year that she attributes to CosmoKidz and SOAR are the following:

“I have seen an increase of independent behavior. Students will attempt to use SOAR first to resolve conflict or issues. If this strategy does not work, then they will approach an authority figure.

Students are much more aware of each other, other’s feelings, and other’s behavior. They try to help each other by correcting the behavior, pointing out feelings, and apologizing when they feel they are in the wrong. At times, this can overcompensate with some students being overly concerned with other student’s behavior.

When speaking to each other, I have seen a shift in word choice and a move from generalities to specifics. At the beginning of the year, it was very common for a student to use statements such as “he/she is being mean” and “He/she hurt my feelings”. Now, I hear specifics such as “When you wouldn’t share the ball with me I felt sad and mad.” This is repairable and much

less emotionally damaging than the generalized almost personal attacks.

Through the SOAR conversations we have had over the year, students are identifying how they feel inside and putting words to those feelings instead of just reacting. I have seen an increase in thinking before speaking and a decrease of knee jerk reactions to situations. For example, at the beginning of the year if someone ran into someone else in line, the common reaction was to push them back. Now, I have seen a decrease in that physical behavior and an increase in discussion.

At the beginning of the year, students came to me to resolve problems and even small issues. Over the year there has been a shift over from me to them. When students come to me I can remind them to use SOAR and talk to each other, they are able to do this now since we have modeled and practiced it.”

The other first-grade class was more typical of what one would expect from six year-olds. At the beginning of the year these children handled conflicts by treating others the way they are being treated (an “eye for an eye” perspective). They had difficulty taking turns and listening to others and they mostly cried, threw a fit, or tattled when there was a disagreement or conflict. By the end of the year, she has noticed that the children are much more aware of SOARing and non-soaring behavior and they will use the language of SOAR to talk about someone hurting them.

Second-Grade Classes

One of the second-grade teachers said that this has been one of the most challenging classes she has had. Overall, the students were very talkative and not aware of how their actions and behaviors affected others. By the end of the school year, the most significant change that she observed was, “the way in which they began to open their hearts and minds to other children.” She referred to SOARing behavior throughout the school year and asked questions and made observations based on SOAR. For example, if a child was doing something “mindless” she would say, “do you see what you’re doing right now?” to remind him/her to sense what’s around you. When she observed someone helping another student she would say, “thanks for opening your hands to help___.” By the end of the year, the students knew what SOARing looked like and they could point out SOARing and non-SOARing behavior.

The other second-grade teacher made a clear distinction between what the children knew about CosmoKidz and SOAR by the end of the year and how they behaved. She has noticed that the children, overall, still have a difficult

time listening, expressing and managing their strong emotions, interacting well and including other children in their play, and not tattling. She has found that using the question, “are you SOARing?” can redirect unwanted behavior, but the behaviors don’t last. She has also found that outside influences such as parents and siblings can undercut progress in the children’s positive behavior. She provided an example of a student who can talk about what being nice looks like and why it’s important but, “the minute I’m not looking, she is being mean. I know she has learned this behavior from her mother. I have tried talking to her about this, but she just goes back to her own ways because that is what is taught in her home.”

At the end of the school year every child in kindergarten through second grade was given a questionnaire asking what SOAR stands for and providing an example of SOARing behavior. It is clear from their responses that they understand SOAR and SOARing behavior, although some examples of SOARing behavior are more general than others. But even the general responses like, “I can be kind” (a kindergartner) indicate the relational nature of SOARing behavior. The second grade students were able to give more nuanced responses. For example, “When ___ got picked on and she had no one to play with her. I asked if she wanted to play with me.” This developmental progression of naming specific actions and behaviors is what we are hoping for and expecting.

A summary of this questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

Question #3: How does the use of CosmoKidz over the course of a school year affect children’s interpersonal communication skill sets and actions across contexts (on the playground and at home)?

To answer this question I relied on data from students, teachers, and parents. Appendix B reinforces that the children understand what SOARing behavior looks like in contexts outside of the classroom. It is interesting to note that only two of the responses from the children related to a classroom context; one talked about following rules and a second mentioned being kind to your teacher. The other responses were playground related (for example, “I can help someone up who fell and got hurt”) or ways of being in a variety of contexts (for example, “to be nice to other people. I saw someone helping someone and I think that was nice and I think that was SOARing behavior”).

All six of the teachers noticed carry-over in their classes, although the carry-over varied with each class. One second-grade teacher and the two teachers that described their classes as quite challenging (a kindergarten and second-grade teacher) expressed the least carry-over across contexts. One of the Kindergarten teachers said that her students are definitely more aware of their social worlds, although it still doesn’t necessarily change their behavior. This was a theme in many of the classes; teachers engaging their

students in conversations about their social worlds and, over time, the students responding in more complex and nuanced ways. However, this knowledge hasn't necessarily translated in changed behavior. One of the second-grade teachers said that her students still, at the end of the school year, have difficulty with many of the social skills that CosmoKidz and SOAR are attempting to foster. Her students don't handle conflict productively, they have a difficult time listening to each other, and they don't interact and play with children who aren't like them." She observes, "I don't see the students playing with other students. They have their groups and if you are not in the group, then you probably will not get to play."

On the other hand, a first-grade teacher noticed a significant difference in her students, both in and outside of the classroom: "There is decrease in physical responses and an increase in resolving problems on their own. They are more aware of other people and their feelings, which in turn directs their behavior. Students would make comments like, 'he wasn't acting with kindness' or 'he was aware of what was around him.'" She also said that she has had two parents tell her that their child is talking differently (using "I" statements and their words) at home with siblings. Another of the kindergarten teachers has also heard from three parents that their children are more helpful, responsive to directions, and getting along better with siblings.

To get a broader perspective from parents on carry-over, the teachers sent home a survey at the end of the school year. The questions asked parents to indicate the frequency of: 1. Mentioning SOARing behavior; 2. Pointing out SOARing behavior; and, 3. Exhibiting SOARing behavior. In response to the questions of exhibiting SOARing behavior, parents in all three grade levels overwhelmingly responded with "sometimes" or "frequently"; few parents responded with "never." In terms of mentioning or pointing out SOARing behavior, most parents said that their child did these things at least "sometimes" with a few parents saying "frequently" or "never." There was one exception to this: a sizable majority of parents from one of the second-grade classes said their child never mentioned SOAR or pointed out SOARing behavior. This is the same class that continued to have difficulty with the social skills that CosmoKidz and SOAR are attempting to foster.

Questions #4 and #5: In what ways does the use of CosmoKidz carry-over into a deliberative context? What communication skill sets are apparent as children deliberate topics related to their social world? And...What are the deliberative and communication skill sets that children are exhibiting in the first modified deliberation? How do these skills change overtime (as observed in the second and third modified deliberations) as children are using CosmoKidz daily in the classroom?

In answering these two questions I am using the three modified deliberations and deliberation summaries to observe the students' skill sets

and changes over time (These summaries can be found in Appendix C). I also asked each teacher in my final interview to tell me what carry-over, if any, occurred after each deliberation.

Although each class has been able to engage in modified deliberations even without much experience using CosmoKidz, it is apparent that the students' abilities to express themselves, build on the ideas and responses of others, weigh options, and apply these conversations in other contexts improved over time.

In the first modified deliberation on sharing, all six classes were able to discuss the pros and cons of each of the four choices that I presented to the students. The responses of each class became more developed with each grade level, although one of the first-grade classes was quite nuanced in some of their responses. For example, one of the girls imitated a way that the puppet Sally could talk to Susie and how Susie could respond. She said, "when you take the ball from me that makes me sad. And when she says I'm sorry she can say, I accept your apology."

When I asked the teachers what kind of carry-over they observed from this first deliberation, all but one of the first-grade teachers said there wasn't much, if any, carry-over. Both of the kindergarten teachers said it was too early in the school year for the students to remember the scenario. One of the second-grade teachers said there was some carry-over when some kids in her class were reminding classmates that "we need to share" when they weren't. The other second-grade teacher said there wasn't any carry-over. She also realized that she had never referred back to the situation or the card on sharing when her students weren't sharing. Both of the first-grade classes did notice some carry-over. One teacher told me her students referred back to the modified deliberation when they were having trouble sharing. The other first-grade teacher told me that seven months after this deliberation, her class was on the playground with only two balls to play with. In deciding how to play with the balls, the children came up with options that were consistent with the deliberations. She said the more typical response would have been for the students to argue and fight about what to do.

The teachers began using CosmoKidz and SOAR after the first deliberation. Although the second deliberation occurred two months later, there was already a change in the quality of the conversation on the topic of listening. The children in all grade levels were able to express themselves in more nuanced ways and to describe a chain of events that might happen based on how the teacher responds to her talkative students. Consistent with the first deliberation, the ability of the children to develop their ideas and build on the ideas of others increased with each grade level, but even the five year-olds were able to describe different outcomes that might occur based on what the teacher did. Most of the students in all of these classes could

also tell me what SOAR stands for and some were able to provide examples of what SOARing behavior might look like. This was only eight weeks after the teachers began referring to SOAR.

When I asked the teachers about any carry-over from this deliberation, both of the kindergarten teachers responded affirmatively. One teacher said that she has brought up the scenario to remind her students to be good listeners. The second teacher told me that she used the deliberation to remind her students that they weren't respecting (the R in SOAR) her when they are talking while she is trying to teach. She said she would not have thought to do that before I did this deliberation. The first-grade carry-over was mixed. One of the teachers said there wasn't much discussion or follow-up after the deliberation. The second teacher, however, said there was quite a lot of carry-over in her class as students would remind their peers to "be quiet, Ms. ___ is talking." Like the first grade classes, the second grade classes were mixed. One teacher said that the scenario has helped the children stay quiet (this was the class that has been very challenging because the students talked so much) while the second teacher said that she still has a big problem with her students listening.

The third modified deliberation occurred seven months after the teachers began using CosmoKidz and SOAR. There was a qualitative jump in the students' ability to tell me what SOAR stands for and to provide examples of SOARing behavior. Not all of the classes could provide specific examples, but it was clear that they have a general understanding that SOARing behavior helps make relationships smoother and helps people feel better in their relationships than non-SOARing behavior. There were also many examples of very specific SOARing actions and behaviors that the children could name.

This was the deliberation that did not include choices but rather asked them to name 4 choices that would demonstrate kindness to Rico. Every grade level came up with overlapping choices although the role-playing coached-practice sessions included ways of showing kindness in the kindergarten and first-grade classes that were not mentioned in their four choices. Only the second-grade classes showed consistency between their choices and their coached-practice role-plays. The most striking aspect of this deliberation for me was the difference in "whole-body" ways of responding between the kindergarten/first-grade students and the second-grade classes. Shows of affection and hugging were much more prevalent with the younger children as ways of showing kindness and helping Rico feel better.

This third deliberation had the most carry-over for the kindergarten and first-grade classes. One kindergarten teacher told me that her class talked about Rico and his dog days after the deliberation; it even became part of a math lesson. It also prompted stories from the children about losing their own pets and the emotions they experienced. The other kindergarten

teacher said that her students talked more openly about losing a pet after the deliberation. They also noticed children on the playground who looked sad and they wanted to help cheer those children up. One of the first-grade teachers said that two weeks after the deliberation one student in her class had a dog that needed stitches. She told her classmates about it and they responded with the gestures of kindness that they talked about in their coached-practice role-plays. The teacher whose student lost her dad used the deliberation to talk with her students about the girl whose father died. She said this provided an opportunity for other students to talk in more depth about their own losses. She also noticed her class showing more empathy and patience toward the student whose dad had died. The second-grade teachers had a very different experience. Both said there was no specific carry-over with their students.

Having said that, there is clearly growth for all three grades in the children's ability to deliberate options and choices. In some classes these deliberations have positively affected the ways in which the children have responded weeks and, in one case, months later. In other classes the move from cognitively knowing something to acting on that knowledge has been inconsistent and, in some cases, non-existent.

Concluding Thoughts

In looking closely at the data from teachers, parents, and students as well as personally observing and interacting with each class through the three modified deliberations, it is clear that CosmoKidz and SOAR are making a difference in the social worlds of these children. They are developing awareness of their social worlds as well as communicative skills and abilities that are moving them in the direction of becoming good citizens. The differences, however, between "knowing about" and "acting on that knowledge" is inconsistent. One class in particular stands out as an example of children integrating knowing with acting, one class stands out as an example of the lack of this integration, and the other classes are somewhere in between.

I have a hypothesis about this that is based on one of the interview questions that I asked each teacher. I wanted to know to what extent the teachers followed my instruction of using CosmoKidz most days, if not everyday. I was surprised by their response. The class that by far has shown the most development with these relational skills is one of the first-grade classes. Some of these students may have begun the year showing an unusual level of relational intelligence but, nonetheless, this class seemed more relationally and emotionally attuned than any other grade and class. The parents of the students in this class also said that their child mentioned SOAR and CosmoKidz and pointed out SOARing behavior at home more than parents of any of the other classes and grades. I learned from my interview that this was the only teacher who used CosmoKidz almost daily and

referred consistently to the cards and SOARing behavior. She used situations throughout the day as “teaching moments” to help her students become more aware of what they were saying and doing that was making a social world. She also asked the children to role-play situations to observe how it feels to act in various ways. I have also observed her modeling the kinds of relational skills that CosmoKidz is attempting to teach.

The class that showed the least progress in these skills (at least in their ability to “act” on what they cognitively know) is a second-grade class. Interestingly, the parents of the students in this class said more than any other grade and class that their child never mentioned SOAR and CosmoKidz nor pointed out SOARing behavior. What I learned in my interview with the teacher is that she only used the cards about once every two weeks. She said it was difficult for her to remember to use the cards and SOAR because she was attempting to master a new curriculum. She also realized that her job would be much easier if the children were behaving. She reflected that the children need to learn these skills somewhere and most of them are certainly not learning them at home. But she wasn’t using the cards consistently enough to provide her students with a “steady diet” of talking about and acting more mindfully into their social worlds.

The other teachers used the cards between two and four days a week. Some of the teachers used the puppets to help the children explore emotions while other teachers didn’t use puppets at all. Some teachers asked their students to role-play while others only engaged their students in “talk” about the topics.

All of the teachers used SOAR to help point out behavior but some used it much more than others. I found that the teachers who regularly used SOAR in specific ways and contexts had children who were able to tell me more specifically what SOARing behavior looks like. This was evidenced in the deliberations and in the student responses to the questionnaire about SOAR and SOARing behavior.

A conclusion that I am drawing from this year is the frequency of engaging the children in conversations about their social worlds matter. These conversations don’t need to be long: The first-grade teacher said that most days she used ComoKidz for ten minutes. On a day that I observed her, she spent eleven minutes working through the topic of “someone appearing angry with you and you don’t know why.” The almost daily conversations begin to create “habits” that the occasional use of CosmoKidz cannot create.

This conclusion is confirmed by the Special Education and pre-school teacher who also used CosmoKidz and SOAR consistently. She used CosmoKidz ten to fifteen minutes each afternoon with the Special Education kindergartners and first-graders. She had the children sit in a circle and they would read a card, the puppet would act out the scenario and then she

would ask the children to share their thoughts and experiences with the puppet. She used CosmoKidz each morning for ten minutes with the three and four year-olds. She used the puppets to act out a scenario and the children would share their ideas about how to act with the puppets. She has found that over time both groups are, “communicating their feelings more rather than hitting, biting and kicking on each other....they are aware of their actions....they are aware of the kind things they do.”

A second conclusion that has useful implications is based on the last question I asked each teacher. I wanted to know if using CosmoKidz with their students has affected their own awareness of social worlds. I was delightfully surprised that every teacher said yes. Here is a sampling of what some of them said:

“Sometimes I’m upset about something and I’m now thinking what am I saying to these kids that isn’t SOARing or respectful. I may be upset with something that has happened _____ (gives a few examples of contexts) so I am thinking more about how I react to them. When we are talking about SOAR, I think it makes me think more about behaviors.”

“This program has reminded me to listen better and try to read what other people might be thinking and if there might be some misunderstandings that I can help resolve. I’m slowing down a lot more. I watch more—our words are very powerful.”

“It has affected how I think about my students’ social worlds and has helped me expand my thinking about their social worlds. At home, I have teenagers, and their social worlds are very different. I think just by discussing these issues with the kids and looking at things from different angles, I’m more aware of complexity.”

“Teaching over the years I’ve had students who have been bullies. Through CosmoKidz and SOAR I’m learning that there are different ways to handle a situation. I used to say, ‘hit back or walk away’. Now I can think of different ways to help the children respond. Handle it a different way. Use your words and not your fist.”

This reinforces my own hypothesis that we (all of us) are changed as we begin to “look at communication” and become more aware of our part in making social worlds. Some of the changes might seem small (increased awareness) while other changes might lead to better outcomes (acting with more compassion). But increased awareness makes new choices possible for how to think and act. Adults need this just as much as children do.

This leads to my last observation: Parents need to become more involved in the conversations about their child’s social world. Most all of the teachers have talked about how difficult it is to involve parents in the life of their child’s education. This was also the case in getting responses from parents

about CosmoKidz, even though the surveys were very quick and easy to fill out. The skills that CosmoKidz is attempting to teach will have a better chance of being integrated into a child's way of being in the world if s/he is also learning them at home. Consequently, a next step is to think about how to meaningfully involve parents in CosmoKidz and SOAR in ways that are easy for parents and enable them to see the benefits of doing so. We began last year's pilot program with a "parents and pizza" night. According to the Principal, it was a huge success (well over 50% turnout) because we offered two items that many parents need: Free food and a tee-shirt for their child. Perhaps we should experiment with beginning the next school year in this way to combine what parents need with some basic instructions for how to talk with their child about his/her social world.

This brings me back to the beginning of this summary. Involving parents and teachers in the development of the child's social world is another way of "addressing the problems affecting the child's life and community." It is also a way of strengthening public skills that democracy requires as it increases the communicative skills and abilities for adults as well as the children in their lives.

Appendix A: Student Carry-Over Survey for Parents

**PARENTAL SURVEY ABOUT SOAR "CARRY-OVER"
AUGUST, 2014
FIRST GRADE REPOSSES BASED ON KINDERGARTEN EXPERIENCE
11 RESPONSES**

1. During the Summer, did your child *mention* SOAR or SOARing behavior?

Frequently (0) Sometimes (6) Never (4)

2. During the Summer, did your child *point out* SOARing behavior? (For example, saying something like, "She is opening her hands to help others")

Frequently (1) Sometimes (6) Never (4)

3. During the Summer, did your child *exhibit* SOARing behavior?

Sensing what's around him/her

Frequently (0) Sometimes (9) Never (1)

Opening his/her hands to help others

Frequently (4) Sometimes (5) Never (2)

Acting with kindness

Frequently (5) Sometimes (6) Never (0)

Respecting other people

Frequently (5) Sometimes (6) Never (0)

**PARENTAL SURVEY ABOUT SOAR "CARRY-OVER"
AUGUST, 2014
SECOND GRADE REPOSSES BASED ON FIRST GRADE EXPERIENCE
6 RESPONSES**

1. During the Summer, did your child *mention* SOAR or SOARing behavior?

Frequently (0) Sometimes (5) Never (1)

2. During the Summer, did your child *point out* SOARing behavior? (For example, saying something like, "She is opening her hands to help others")

Frequently (0) Sometimes (3) Never (3)

3. During the Summer, did your child *exhibit* SOARing behavior?

Sensing what's around him/her

Frequently (0) Sometimes (5) Never (1)

Opening his/her hands to help others

Frequently (1) Sometimes (5) Never (0)

Acting with kindness

Frequently (5) Sometimes (1) Never (0)

Respecting other people

Frequently (5) Sometimes (1) Never (0)

**PARENTAL SURVEY ABOUT SOAR "CARRY-OVER"
AUGUST, 2014
THIRD GRADE RESPONSE BASED ON SECOND GRADE EXPERIENCE
1 RESPONSE**

1. During the Summer, did your child *mention* SOAR or SOARing behavior?

Frequently (0) Sometimes (1) Never (0)

2. During the Summer, did your child *point out* SOARing behavior? (For example, saying something like, "She is opening her hands to help others")

Frequently (1) Sometimes (0) Never (0)

3. During the Summer, did your child *exhibit* SOARing behavior?

Sensing what's around him/her

Frequently (1) Sometimes (0) Never (0)

Opening his/her hands to help others

Frequently (1) Sometimes (0) Never (0)

Acting with kindness

Frequently (1) Sometimes (0) Never (0)

Respecting other people

Frequently (1) Sometimes (0) Never (0)

Appendix B: Summary of the SOAR questionnaire for Students

Kindergarten: N=40

First-Grade: N=34

Second-Grade: N=47

This year you learned about SOARing behavior. What does SOAR stand for?
Please circle the correct phrase for each letter in SOAR.

- S:
- Seek out a friend
 - Kindergarten: 0 responses
 - First-grade: 1 response
 - Second-Grade: 1 response
 - Sense what's around you
 - Kindergarten: 33 responses
 - First-grade: 31 responses
 - Second-Grade: 44 responses
 - Stand up straight
 - Kindergarten: 2 responses
 - First-grade: 1 response
 - Second-Grade: 0 responses
 - Say you're sorry if you have hurt someone
 - Kindergarten: 5 responses
 - First-grade: 1 response
 - Second-Grade: 3 responses
- O:
- Only talk when you're called on
 - Kindergarten: 3 responses
 - First-grade: 0 responses
 - Second-Grade: 0 responses
 - Offer candy to your friends
 - Kindergarten: 1 response
 - First-grade: 1 response
 - Second-Grade: 1 response
 - Open your hands to help others
 - Kindergarten: 34 responses
 - First-grade: 31 responses
 - Second-Grade: 46 responses
 - Own toys that you'll share
 - Kindergarten: 2 responses
 - First-grade: 2 responses
 - Second-Grade: 0 responses

A:	Act with kindness Kindergarten: 36 responses First-grade: 33 responses Second-Grade: 46 responses
	Ask someone to be your friend Kindergarten: 1 response First-grade: 0 responses Second-Grade: 1 response
	Allow a friend to play with your toys Kindergarten: 0 responses First-grade: 0 responses Second-Grade: 0 responses
	Always look both ways before you cross the street Kindergarten: 3 responses First-grade: 0 responses Second-Grade: 0 response
R:	Read when you can Kindergarten: 1 response First-grade: 0 responses Second-Grade: 0 responses
	Rely on your friends for help Kindergarten: 0 responses First-grade: 1 response Second-Grade: 1 response
	Rest everyday Kindergarten: 1 response First-grade: 1 response Second-Grade: 0 responses
	Respect other people Kindergarten: 38 responses First-grade: 32 responses Second-Grade: 47 responses

Provide a specific example of SOARing behavior

Kindergarten Responses:

- I can help my friend clean up his mess
- I can help someone that fell and got hurt
- I can act with kindness
- I can have self control
- I can be kind
- I can be nice
- I can listen to my Nana
- I would help people up if they fall
- I could act with kindness

- I can help people up
- I can be nice to people
- I can listen
- I can make people laugh
- I can help them up if they fall
- Behave
- Play nice
- If somebody falls down I could help them
- I somebody fell down I would help them up
- I could listen to others
- I could give someone a present

There were no first-grade responses

Second-Grade Responses:

- I think SOARing is being nice to each other, like when Sophia helped me when ___ tripped me
- If someone is sitting down and if they are sad you can ask them if they want to play with you
- Respect not just one but more than one because it's nice to be friends
- A boy was being mean to a girl. She got sad so another girl came to help her. And then she was happy
- SOAR is when Lilly helped me when I fell
- When ___ got picked on and she had no one to play with her. I asked if she wanted to play with me
- I have helped someone when she lost a member of her family and I asked her if she wanted to talk about it
- I think SOARing behavior means to help and respect other people. I helped someone today. She fell on her arm and I saw her
- Say sorry if you hurt someone. Help someone
- You can help other people
- SOARing behavior is when I helped Darryn up
- SOARing means about other people being nice to other people
- SOARing is behaving nice. Once I saw somebody helping
- You sense what's around you, you open your hands and help other people
- I will respect other people
- Like if someone is bullying someone I can tell the bully to stop
- It is a world that has means to teach you to help others
- I would help someone if they were hurt. I think SOARing behavior is good so people be nice to each other. I helped Shayna when she fell
- I think SOARing behavior means to be nice to other people. I saw someone helping someone and I think that was nice and I think that was SOARing behavior

- When Daisy fell in PE, me and Shayna asked if she was OK. I helped her get up too
- Soaring behavior is when you open your hands for others when somebody gets hurt
- Soar behavior is open your hands if someone falls down
- Soaring behavior means being kind to each other and even if you're not their friend
- To be nice and to share. To be helpful to other people
- SOARing behavior is like when somebody falls you help them
- You can help them get up when they are hurt and act kindness to your teacher
- SOARing means to be kind, be respectful, and follow the rules
- Act with kindness with people and sense around you
- SOARing behavior is when you act with kindness
- Help others when they get hurt or get pushed on the ground. Make them feel better
- SOARing behavior means nice stuff like kindness or help be kind
- Be nice is someone is hurt
- Share with people. Respect your friends. Be kind
- Help other people
- When someone is hurt you open your hands to help others
- Be nice to people
- Sharing with my friends. Helping others when they are hurt
- When someone is hurt he or she can help them
- Help someone that is hurt
- To help other people
- Helping people when they need help
- Helping someone who can barely walk down the stairs

Appendix C: Three Modified Deliberation Summaries

First Modified Deliberation: Sharing

On September 11, 2014 I met with two kindergarten, two first-grade, and two second-grade classes to engage the students in a “modified deliberation” about sharing. Each class had the same scenario and the same four choices. I asked each class to tell me what they thought was good and bad about each choice and which choice they liked the best and why. Every class was videotaped. When viewing the videotape, I noted the following: 1. The flow of the conversation. This included observing the conversational turns, the number of interruptions, the engagement of the children throughout the conversation, and the number of children who spoke and their gender; 2. The types of comments. For example, observing the number of comments that demonstrated concern and empathy for others, comments that demonstrated agency (doing something would make either a positive or negative difference); comments that were based on not getting caught or in trouble, etc.; 3. The children’s ability to articulate the pros and cons of each choice and why one choice was better than another. This included noting key words and phrases that the children were using throughout the conversation and their reasoning for why one choice was better than another.

A Description of the Scenario and the Four Choices

I had two female puppets, Sally and Susie. The puppets have a smile on one side of the puppet and a sad face with tears on the other side. I told the students that both puppets were their age and the girls were at recess. These girls simultaneously saw a ball that they wanted to play with. They each tried to grab the ball and Susie ended up with it. This made Sally very sad (I demonstrated both girls trying to grab the ball and Susie getting it. Then I showed the students Sally’s sad face with tears). I then told the students that Sally had to make a decision about what she was going to do next and I wanted them to help Sally make a decision. I told them we would explore four possible ways that Sally could act into this situation and that I wanted them to tell me what they thought about each possible choice by discussing what they liked and what they didn’t like about each choice.

The four choices were: 1. Sally could go find someone else to play with; 2. Sally could grab the ball and run away from Susie; 3. Sally could tell a teacher or an adult that Susie isn’t sharing; or, 4. Sally could tell Susie that she is sad that Sally grabbed the ball and that she wants them to play with the ball together.

Observations of the Kindergarten Students

There were 9 children in one class (4 boys and 5 girls) and 13 children in the second class (9 boys and 4 girls).

Both classes were engaged throughout the conversation. One class had a lot of interruptions and children talking over each other. The second class had a “question/response” communication pattern (I’d ask a question and the children would respond). Their responses were fairly brief with only a few responses building on previous comments.

Both classes wanted the girls to be friends. They expressed that the girls would be sad if they got into a fight and they weren’t friends anymore.

In the first class, a student immediately said that the girls should find another activity that they both liked ...or they could throw the ball together... or Susie could say I’m sorry. Two of the children gave these responses before I introduced any of the choices. As we progressed through the choices, this class was clearly the most interested in the girls playing together and preserving their relationship. No one thought it was a good idea for Sally to grab the ball and run. But they all thought that the girls should figure out a way to play together, even if it meant playing a game that didn’t involve the ball.

The second class focused on the individual girls during the discussion of the first choice that involved Sally playing with someone else and the third choice of Sally telling the teacher. They were concerned about Susie being sad if Sally ran off to find someone else to play with. But they also thought that it might be good for Sally to find someone else to play with so the girls wouldn’t get into a fight. The students were making distinctions between the importance of not getting into a fight but also not wanting one of the girls to be sad if she ended up playing by herself. They also expressed concern about Susie being mean or being a bully by taking the ball and keeping it. So some thought that telling a teacher would help the girls work it out.

It wasn’t until I asked them about sharing as a possible choice that the students began to talk about sharing as a way to help them be friends...and the importance of them being friends. The students expressed how good it feels to share and that working out how to share the ball would help their friendship.

I was struck by the sensitivity of the students in both classes focusing on not wanting either girl to have hurt feelings and wanting both of the girls to stay friends. Not one of the students thought that taking the ball away from Susie was a good idea. One person thought that telling a teacher might get the girls in trouble but others focused on the teacher helping the girls work out the problem. Both classes favored the fourth choice of the girls working out the conflict and staying friends.

Observations of the First-Grade Students

There were 14 children in one class (9 boys and 5 girls) and 11 children in the second class (3 boys and 8 girls). Both classes were engaged throughout the conversation and both boys and girls spoke fairly evenly.

The first class immediately responded to the scenario before I had a chance to introduce the choices. The unprompted response was for the girls to share the ball. One student said they could get more friends involved and pass the ball around. All of the children thought that it was good to share and that the girls wouldn't be sad if they shared. They also talked about sharing being a "nice" way to be.

As I worked my way through the choices this class was very interested in the relationship between the girls and in the girls not fighting. They wanted Sally and Susie to figure out how they could preserve their friendship. This theme continued when I asked about Sally grabbing the ball from Susie and running off to play. No one thought this was a good idea. The children were concerned that running off with the ball would hurt Susie's feelings and that it would be better to ask Susie for the ball instead of stealing it.

The focus on their friendship shifted when I introduced the choice of Sally telling a teacher. They didn't seem as interested in the teacher helping the girls work things out as they were about one or both girls getting in trouble. This class went into detail about how telling a teacher would be tattling, or that the girls might also get in trouble from their parents, or that they might be punished with a time-out or having their phone taken away. This choice was a clear shift in thinking about what the consequences of telling a teacher might be. Having said that, the clear consensus involved the girls playing together and sharing, not fighting and not tattling.

The second class started out as the first—before I introduced the four choices one child said that the girls should share. Everyone agreed with the student and said that the girls could play catch and take turns, and that they would both be happy. A girl chimed in after this discussion and said that "she could say, when you don't share the ball it makes me sad. Could you share it?"

When I asked about the choice of Sally playing with someone else, the first response was no because these girls are best friends. But then another student said that she could play with someone else and then come back to play with Susie. If Sally did that the girls wouldn't get into a fight. The students then talked about alternative games that the girls could play—they could play on the swings or they could toss the ball together.

No one thought that grabbing the ball was a good thing. They said that this would make the girls sad. A student said that when someone just takes something it makes me sad.

At one point in the conversation a girl imitated the puppets talking. Using her hands to imitate the puppets, she said, “when you take the ball from me that makes me sad. And when she says I’m sorry she can say I accept your apology”. Another child followed up by saying, “tomorrow I can play with you”.

This class had mixed responses about telling a teacher. Some thought it was a bad thing because both girls could get in trouble, it is tattling, they could miss recess and it would make Susie sad because she would go to detention. Some thought it was good to tell a teacher because the teacher could take the ball away and the girls would have to figure out something else to do (like playing on the swings or the monkey bars) or the teacher could help the girls talk together and get along.

Observations of the Second-Grade Students

There were 17 students in one class (9 boys and 8 girls) and 23 students in the second class (12 boys and 11 girls). Both classes were animated throughout the conversation and many of the students’ responses built on previous responses.

The first class began with a student immediately saying that the girls should share. The student said that the girls could play catch and that it was good to share. All of the students agreed. They said that it’s good to be friends and they both would be happier if they shared.

The students in this class responded similarly to the first grade students about the pros and cons of Sally going off to play with someone else. Some thought it was a good thing because Susie is being mean and a bully; there are a lot of people who aren’t mean so Sally should play with one of them. Others thought it was good because it would keep the girls from getting into a fight. Some thought it was a bad idea because the girls are best friends and best friends don’t do that. If Sally played with someone else they might not be best friends anymore. Another student said that Susie might try to apologize and if Sally walked away to play with someone else, she wouldn’t hear the apology. Another student thought that Susie would cry if Sally walked away and then they wouldn’t be friends anymore.

None of the students thought it was a good idea for Sally to grab the ball from Susie. They said that it would cause a fight, that one of the girls might get hurt, that they would be sad and they wouldn’t play together and go over to each other’s houses.

There was quite an extensive conversation around the choice of Sally telling the teacher that Susie grabbed the ball and wasn’t playing with her. Some thought it was good to tell the teacher because the fighting would stop and the teacher could help the girls to not get hurt. But several of the children thought it was bad to tell the teacher because they might get in trouble and

they both could be sent home. There was an extended conversation about what could happen if the teacher became involved—the ball might belong to someone else (not the two girls) and that student would never get the ball back because the teacher took it. And this would make the student who wasn't involved in the incident sad because s/he doesn't have his/her ball. This conversation included a third person that wasn't part of the scenario that I created and there was quite a bit of empathy for this person.

This class was mixed in terms of the best option. Some thought that telling a teacher was the best option while others thought that sharing the ball or finding another toy that they could both play with was the best option. All of these options however were based on the idea of the girls getting along so they could stay friends.

The second class didn't have anyone immediately say that sharing was the best option. This was one of the few classes that waited until I described a choice before responding.

Everyone felt that Sally finding someone else to play with was a good option. They said that Susie was being mean and not sharing and so it's good to find someone else to play with who is nice and who will share. There was no mention about this damaging the friendship or hurting Susie's feelings. The clear sentiment was that Sally shouldn't try to play with someone who isn't being nice.

All of the students thought that grabbing the ball and running away was a bad idea. They expressed that Susie would be mean if she did this. They also expressed that if Susie did this, Sally might tell the teacher and both girls would get in trouble.

The students all thought that telling a teacher was a bad idea. Their reasoning included that telling a teacher would negatively affect their friendship, that it would be tattling and that the girl who did the tattling would not be liked by her friend anymore.

All of the students liked the option of sharing the best. They said that both girls would be happy if they shared and if they are mean to each other they both would be sad. They also said that if they were sharing they wouldn't get hurt. They talked about tossing the ball as a way to play together.

Overall Observations

I was struck by how clear these five to seven year olds are about the importance of sharing, of not hurting another person's feelings, and of preserving a friendship. No one expressed that "an eye for an eye" (grabbing the ball back from Susie) was a good thing to do. They seemed genuinely concerned about not wanting someone to have hurt feelings or for friendships to become compromised over a fight about the ball.

I also observed that all three grade levels expressed a dual set of realities: 1. Sally should act to help preserve the relationship and to minimize sadness and both of the girls should share. This might include playing a completely different game if it helps the girls stay friends and avoid fighting; and, 2. Involving a teacher or an adult creates a tension among the children between the adult helping to resolve the conflict and the kids getting in trouble. When the students talked about getting in trouble, they expressed two concerns. One involved the consequences for both of the girls being sent to the office and/or being punished by parents. But the kids also expressed a fear of losing a friend and not being liked by their peers if they told on a friend. The ability to talk about these tensions became stronger with age and grade level; the five year olds spoke in more general terms while the first and second graders were able to develop scenarios of what could happen based on what Sally chooses to do. By second grade, the children were able to imagine how other children could be affected by telling a teacher.

One of the conclusions I draw from this discussion is that the children (even five year olds who have just started primary school) have a fairly clear idea of what these two puppets should do; act in ways that help these girls remain friends and that minimize hurt feelings and sadness. They are also able to talk about the pros and cons of actions and even imagine how children who are not directly involved in the situation might be affected.

CosmoKidz as a Possible Factor in the Children's Decision-Making

In the Spring semester of 2014, half of the students in the current first and second grade classes participated in CosmoKidz and SOAR for four months (Sense what's around you; Open your hands to help others; Act with kindness; Respect other people). The purpose of CosmoKidz is to provide daily ten-minute discussions on topics related to the children's social worlds (i.e., sharing, teasing, making new friends, bullying, etc.). One of my hypotheses is that as children engage daily in these conversations they will become more aware of their part in the creation of their social worlds. They will also develop skills for acting more mindfully into challenging situations.

As I looked at the videotapes of the first and second grade conversations, I didn't see a significant distinction between the comments of CosmoKidz and non-CosmoKidz students. There were definitely students who had participated in CosmoKidz who were able to articulate what Sally should do to help the girls remain friends and share. But some of the non-CosmoKidz were able to do this as well. And none of the kindergarten students had been exposed to CosmoKidz when I held the modified deliberation on sharing, and yet these students clearly stated that sharing was the preferred choice because the girls wouldn't be sad and it was good for their friendship. Consequently, this deliberation didn't show a significant distinction between the CosmoKidz and the non-CosmoKidz groups.

However, a majority of parents who filled out a questionnaire about possible “carry-over” during the Summer of 2014 said that their child mentioned, pointed out, and exhibited SOARing behavior at least “sometimes” or “frequently” throughout the Summer.

One of the first grade teachers also made this observation of the children in her class during the first two months of this academic year:

“I do notice an awareness in the former CosmoKidz that the other children do not possess yet. They have better insights and give better feedback beyond the more typical responses from the other kids. At this time, I do not see a significant difference in the ways they interact with other children, as in play and dealing with conflict. Both the Cosmo and non-Cosmo kids are interacting in similar ways appropriate for their age level. The difference I do see is in how they communicate and how they are more aware of the other person when they are communicating or in adult-led discussions.”

The observation of this teacher is consistent with the data that I have received from all of the teachers during the first two months of the school year as compared to the observations of this first modified deliberation: there is a significant distinction between what the children are able to articulate about the importance of sharing as they discussed the four options and how they interact with each other on a daily basis. All of the children expressed that grabbing the ball and running is not a good choice because it makes others sad and it negatively affects the relationship. And yet, these same children are behaving daily in the ways that they say are not good for Sally and Susie. Consequently, throughout the rest of the school year, I will be observing how much of the children’s ability to articulate choices that help the puppets in their social worlds carry-over into their own relationships with their peers. Additionally, I will be observing whether this carry-over increases as the children spend more time on the CosmoKidz topics and with SOARing behavior.

The next modified deliberation will occur in early January.

Second Modified Deliberation: Listening

On January 8, 2015 I met with two kindergarten, two first-grade, and two second-grade classes to engage the students in a “modified deliberation” on listening. In my prior discussions with the teachers, they described their frustration with students’ incessant talking while they were trying to teach. We chose this topic as one way of engaging the students in a “third person” experience of children interrupting a teacher as she attempted to instruct her students on an upcoming math exam. Putting the children in this person position provides an opportunity for the students to think about how talking that is disruptive can affect the teacher as well as other students in the class.

A Description of the Scenario and the Four Choices

I had three volunteer women help with this scenario. The women had a puppet on each hand, for a total of six puppets. Each puppet had a nametag and they were introduced to the children as students in a class much like theirs. I had a puppet teacher on my hand; her name tag said “Mrs. Kim”.

The set-up for each class was the following: I told the students that I wanted them to pay very close attention to what was about to happen in the puppet class because Mrs. Kim will need their help in thinking about how to respond to her students. We then began the role-play. The puppet students had just come in from recess, so Mrs. Kim asked if they enjoyed their time playing outside. They responded affirmatively and Amy, a very talkative puppet, began to tell Mrs. Kim that she still has lots of energy and she wants to know when they will have their next recess. Mrs. Kim uses this exchange to remind the class that they need to focus on learning; it is important that they look at her, close their lips, and put their hands on the desk. The puppets comply. Mrs. Kim begins to tell them that there is a math test later in the week that they need to prepare for. She starts to tell them why it’s important that they understand math, but the talking begins again. Amy asks if the test will be hard. Sally says she doesn’t like math. Mrs. Kim reminds the students that they are talking and they need to listen. The puppets stop talking, Mrs. Kim thanks them, and she continues to tell them about the importance of the upcoming assignment. Amy makes another comment. Mrs. Kim reminds Amy that she isn’t listening. Amy becomes quiet. Mrs. Kim continues the lesson. The pattern of Amy and one or two other students interrupting the teacher continue for another few turns. Finally, a puppet named Emily shows her sad face with tears and says to Amy, I’m not good at math and I can’t hear the teacher. At that point, Mrs. Kim stops the class interaction and turns to the real class of students with her sad face and tears. I then tell the students that Emily is not the only

person who is sad. Mrs. Kim is also very sad. Mrs. Kim needs to decide what she will do next and she needs your help.

I tell the students there are four possible choices that the teacher is thinking about and I want them to help the teacher think through each choice. At this point the modified deliberation begins. I introduce only one choice at a time and we talk about the pros and cons of each choice before I introduce the next possible choice. The four choices are: 1. Take away class privileges; in this case “no recess”; 2. Write a letter to the parents of the children who are talking, letting the parents know that their child is being disruptive; 3. Send the children who are talking to the Principal’s office; and 4. Talk to the class about the teacher’s frustration and how talking affects the teacher, the students, and the learning process.

Every class was videotaped. I did a loose transcription of the conversation in each class and I focused my attention on the following: 1. The ability of the children to reason about the pros and cons of each choice; 2. The key words and phrases the students used to frame their thinking about the choices; 3. Their own turn-taking ability—i.e., listening vs. interrupting each other, building on previous comments, etc.; and, 4. Their engagement with the topic throughout our conversation.

Observations of the Kindergarten Students

There are two kindergarten classes; on the day I was there, the first class had 11 boys and 7 girls and the second class had 12 boys and 5 girls. Both classes were engaged throughout the conversation although only about half of the students in each class provided verbal input. The students who were quiet were nonetheless paying attention and engaged.

I ended the role-play with the student puppets and began the conversation with the kindergarten students asking them why they thought the teacher, Mrs. Kim, was sad. The students in the first class said, “the teacher is sad because the students are being bad.” I followed up by asking what they were doing that was bad? They responded by saying that the puppets were talking during their learning time, they were being loud, and they couldn’t hear the teacher. The second kindergarten class answered the question by saying the class is not listening. A second student raised his hand and said, “it would help if kids raised their hands.” After this initial conversation I proceeded to talk with the students about the four choices.

Choice 1: Take away privileges: No recess

With regard to the first choice, most of the students in both classes thought this was a bad idea but for different reasons. The first class talked about how sad the class would be if recess were taken away; they wouldn’t have fun. One student said that if they missed recess they wouldn’t get their energy out and this would make the situation worse. But the primary

responses were based on the sadness children would feel because of missing recess.

The second class talked about the downside of no recess: Excess energy. One boy in particular continued to come back to the problems associated with no recess and the energy that would build up and create more bad behavior. Another student thought that the punishment should be to put the children who aren't listening against the wall so the class could get their energy out at recess. No one in this class thought taking away recess was a helpful idea.

In the first class, a few of the students thought that this choice was good because it would encourage the students to listen because they wouldn't want to miss recess. One student also said that if they weren't out playing but in the classroom, it would provide more time for learning. When I followed up with the question "do you think it would help the children listen better if their recess was taken away?" one student responded by saying, "If they were being good and SOARing they would get recess, but if they are bad every single day and the teacher is taking away recess every single day, they wouldn't get to play." Without prompting the students to think about SOARing behavior, this student made a connection between good behavior (listening), SOARing behavior, and getting recess.

Choice 2: Send a letter home to the parents of the children who aren't listening

The first class was mixed about whether this was a good idea. Some of the students said that this is a good idea because the parents could talk to their child. Another student said that the parents could help teach the kids that they need to listen better. A third student said that sending a letter home only targets the kids who aren't listening and it doesn't punish the whole class. One boy thought that it was a bad idea to send a letter home because the puppet (Amy) would have to go to her room. I followed up by asking if Amy would do better if she had to go to her room? He replied no. Another boy chimed in and said that every time she is bad at school, her parents can send her to her room.

The second class thought this choice was a good idea because the child would be grounded and this would help her behave more. Another student said that parents would put Amy in timeout. A third child said that if parents knew what was happening, their child would behave more. No one expressed that this choice was a bad idea.

Choice 3: Send the children who are disruptive to the Principal's office

In the first class, one student responded that it would be good for the talking puppets to be sent to the Principal's office because they would have to listen. The rest of the class wasn't sure if being sent to the Principal's office would

help the situation. Three children repeated the situation of Amy talking and Emily being sad (the first mention of how the puppet Emily was affected by Amy's talking) but they couldn't say if going to the Principal's office was a good idea.

The second class went back to taking away privileges rather than talking about being sent to the Principal's office. This class talked about the talkative children being grounded and taking away privileges such as no toys, T.V., or phone.

My assumption with this choice is that these 5 year-olds have never been to the Principal's office so they didn't have the experience to draw on in imagining if this would be a helpful consequence.

Choice 4: The teacher can talk to the students about why it is important to listen

The first class had mixed responses to this choice. Some thought that this wouldn't help and that it would be better for Amy to stay home. Another student agreed and thought that Amy should be grounded and not go to school. I followed up by asking, "Do you think she will learn if she isn't going to school?" One boy said no but another said, "it's good for her to be sent to her room if she is being bad." Another boy thought that it would be good for the teacher to talk to the students because it "will help the students if the teacher is talking to them."

The second class thought this was a good idea. One student said that talking to the students might help them SOAR (a second reference to SOAR by a different child). Another said that if the teacher talks to the class it will help with their math. No one thought this choice was a bad idea.

After discussing the four choices, I asked about SOAR and SOARing behavior to see how much the children could talk about it. In both classes the children could tell me what SOAR stands for. When I asked what SOARing behavior might look like in this situation, only one student in each of the classes could answer. Both said that if you are SOARing you would be listening and you would be quiet. The other students gave examples of SOARing behavior involving actions such as keeping hands and feet to yourself, helping other people (in general), helping other people to be good on the playground, and respecting people's space. I asked the students if Amy was respecting her classmates' space by talking and being disruptive. The students said no.

To end our discussion, the puppet Amy apologized to Emily and said she was sorry for talking and making it hard for Emily to pay attention and for making Emily sad. The puppet Emily acknowledged the apology and said that she was feeling better. We did this to demonstrate an example of SOARing behavior.

The key words and the overall framing for both of these classes centered on punishment and taking away privileges. Even at five years old, these students were able to make distinctions between types of punishment—i.e., punishment that affected an entire class and punishment that affected the misbehaving students and what might happen as a result of the type of punishment. One student in both kindergarten classes was able to connect (non)SOARing behavior with the actions of the puppet Amy without any prompting. Once I did introduce SOAR, the class knew what SOARing behavior looks like in a limited way. As I inquired about listening to the teacher as a *show* of respect, the students seemed to understand the connection. However they did not make that connection on their own.

Observations of the First-Grade Students

There are two first-grade classes; on the day I was there, the first class had 7 boys and 6 girls and the second class had 4 boys and 9 girls. Both classes were engaged throughout the conversation. In one class, six boys and two girls spoke; in the second class, eleven children spoke with the conversational turns being fairly evenly divided between boys and girls. The overall discussion in both classes included conversational turns in which a child would respond to what another child had said. In the first class, there might be one additional conversational turn by another student before a new idea was expressed. In the second class, ideas were presented that included three to four conversational turns building on the initial idea. This is in stark contrast to both kindergarten classes in which the children presented their ideas without building on ideas of a previous speaker.

When I stopped the role-play activity after the puppet Emily began to cry because she couldn't hear the teacher, the puppet teacher, Mrs. Kim, turned to the real students with her sad face. I asked the first grade students why they thought the teacher was sad. Both classes said that she was sad because the kids aren't listening. When I asked them why the teacher would be sad because the children aren't listening, the first class said that "they can't talk about math" and the second class said, "people keep interrupting her." When I asked why interruptions would be a problem, the class responded, "you can't hear what the teacher is saying." These initial responses were straightforward: The teacher is sad because the students aren't listening and this makes it difficult to learn. As I engaged the students in the four choices, their responses became a bit more nuanced and developed. The overall theme across choices for the first class was *punishment as a way to redirect behavior*. The overall theme in the second class was the *emotional consequences of the various choices*. These students talked about happiness, sadness, and anger much more than the first class.

Choice 1: Take away privileges: No recess

There was quite a lively discussion about this choice. Some students in the first class thought that it was not helpful to take away recess but the teacher could take away another privilege, like toys or sitting alone for five minutes. They felt that taking away privileges would be a good way to learn a lesson but it was important that children had recess. Other students thought it was helpful to take away recess because the children were talking and the teacher can't teach if her students are talking.

The second class did not think that taking away recess was a good idea. This class was able to express a chain of reasoning that supported their perspective. One student said that all of the children would be sad if recess was taken away. When I asked about that, another student responded by saying that they want recess. A third student said that the kids could take a deep breath to help settle them down (conscious breathing is one of the CosmoKidz cards). A fourth student said that if they don't listen they will not be smart enough to go to second grade. I followed up by asking the students if they thought the kids would want to pay attention if recess was taken away. Another student reiterated that they would all be sad. I asked what might happen if the children were sad. A child replied, "they might be mad at the teacher. And if they are mad at the teacher they might act up even more." Another child said, "if you take away recess they still won't listen. But if you give it back they will."

Choice 2: Send a letter home to the parents of the children who aren't listening

This same class (second class) framed their response to this second choice in terms of sadness. They said that the child would be sad because their parents will ground them and take away their privileges. Another student created a hypothetical scenario of the child hiding the note from her parents; "if the parents found out she may get into more trouble. And her parents would be mad." A child responded to this by using her hands as pretend puppets. She then said, "or Mrs. Kim could say to the students, when you talk while I'm talking I feel sad." (I used this comment to segue to the 4th choice. More on this later.) The other class (first class) didn't like the idea of parents finding out because they might spank their child and take away "their money and x-box." But they thought this could be good because Amy may learn her lesson.

Choice 3: Send the children who are disruptive to the Principal's office

The first class had a spirited discussion about going to the Principal's office. They thought this would be a bad idea and they were able to reason a chain of events occurring (an unusually long set of turns for this class): When the students come back from the Principal's office they will be bad again. And they will get into more trouble and be suspended. And then they would get kicked out of school. Another student said that if they were sent to the

Principal's office "then mom and dad will take away their things." Another student thought that going to ISS (detention) would be good because "they will take away your stuff and then you will want to be quiet and get it back". The second class continued their theme of "sadness." They said that if they went to the Principal's office they might have to sit in a corner and not have recess and they would be sad.

Choice 4: The teacher can talk to the students about why it is important to listen

Both of the classes thought this was a good choice for similar reasons. One set of reasons involved not being punished or having toys and privileges taken away, which will make everyone happy. Students in the second class said if the teacher talked to the children they could still learn a lesson but they would also be happy. Another student built on these ideas by saying that the students could tell their parents that the teacher talked to the class about the importance of listening and the parents will be happy. He said, "I think the kids are going to feel better if the teacher is talking to them and they are talking to their parents." Another child said, "if you give the kids one more chance they will be happy and if they get their grades up their parents will be happy." The second set of reasons was around the issue of "respect." One boy in the first class said, "if the teacher is talking the students will learn a lesson and they will listen. Then they will respect their elder and their teacher."

When I asked them about SOAR and SOARing behavior, the first class knew immediately what SOAR stood for but the second class needed the SOAR bulletin board to remember the acronym. Both classes were able to give me examples of SOARing behavior such as being nice to others and helping others when they fall on the playground. When I asked what Amy might do to SOAR, a student in the second class said, "she could say I'm sorry teacher." There were no other responses from students about what SOARing behavior might look like in this situation.

Observations of the Second-Grade Students

There are two second-grade classes; on the day I was there, the first class had 13 boys and 13 girls and the second class had 16 boys and 11 girls. Both classes were engaged throughout the conversation with a close ratio of boys and girls speaking. The first class repeated and reinforced many of the initial comments that were made and the second class tended to build on the initial comments of others. The overall narrative and framing in the first class was about "learning a lesson and the importance of consequences." There were two competing narratives in the second class; both of them were constructed in a series of conversational turns. The first framing involved taking away privileges, which leads to kids being sad, which leads to kids being mad, which results in kids acting out even more. The second framing

involved taking away privileges, which leads to kids learning a lesson, which results in better behavior. Both classes used *fairness* as a frame for thinking about the best options.

Choice 1: Take away privileges: No recess

Overall, the first class thought taking recess away was a bad idea. These students thought that it would make it harder for children to learn, it would “keep the energy in and you’d go hyper all over the room,” and “students wouldn’t be able to have a snack.” But one student made a comment that “when you’re outside you stop learning and when you are inside you get to learn more and more.” He thought taking away recess would help the students learn more and he didn’t think excess energy was a problem. The second class was split on whether this was a useful option. The students who opposed this option said that taking away recess doesn’t solve the situation. Instead, it makes you want to go to recess even more. One girl said, “this will make the children sadder. And since it’s already taken away they are going to want to talk more.” A boy reinforced this by saying, “if you take away recess they’ll still talk.” Others thought it was a good idea to take away recess and they initially based this on fairness: “they are being bad and taking away learning time so the teacher takes away their recess which is fair because the teacher is trying to teach so they can get into the next grade.” Another student said, “if the talkers don’t care about what they are learning, the teacher isn’t going to care about recess.” Three girls also talked about being motivated to do better if recess was taken away: “If they take recess away, it’s a lesson to not do it again”; “if you take recess away they will want to do more to earn it back”; and, “they all want to learn to get recess back.” This class also had a girl whose perspective showed empathy for the teacher: “It would be bad if recess is taken away because the teacher wouldn’t have a break from the children.”

Choice 2: Send a letter home to the parents of the children who aren’t listening

This class (second class) was also split on Choice 2. Those who thought this was a good choice talked about the importance of parents knowing what their kids are doing. If parents knew what they were doing, the kids would listen more because they don’t want to be in trouble. A girl said if children are grounded they will want to act better. But one boy responded that “when you are in trouble it’s harder to learn.” A girl chimed in, “when you’re in trouble you’re mad and you don’t want to do anything.” Another boy said that he would want to do better if his parents found out that he wasn’t listening. This led to a student providing a scenario similar to the one described in the first-grade class: “If the teacher does send a letter home the kids could take it out of their back pack and throw it in the trash can.” A girl then told a very elaborate story of a friend of hers who tried to throw a letter away that the teacher had sent home. Her parents found out and she

was mad at herself for ripping the paper and not telling her parents. The overall conversation was very spirited with two equally developed perspectives for why this choice was helpful or not.

The other class (first class) liked this option. They talked about Amy's parents being able to talk with Amy about why she shouldn't talk. Most of these students thought if the students got in trouble from their parents, they would be less likely to talk in class. Consequently, this would help them to learn better. Most of these students felt that it was good to have consequences for bad behavior because they would be less likely to be disruptive. But one boy felt that sending a bad letter home would make the situation worse. When I asked him why it would make the situation worse, he said that Amy (not Amy's parents) will respond better to a good note rather than a bad one.

Choice 3: Send the children who are disruptive to the Principal's office

The first class had similar responses that tended to reinforce each other. Most thought that being sent to the Principal's office was good because it would teach Amy to listen. They thought that Amy should be punished in the Principal's office if she is making kids sad (a show of empathy for Emily). They thought that she would learn her lesson and not talk so much. The term "learning a lesson" was repeated quite often with Choice 3 in this class. One girl expressed a different reason for the benefits of going to the office by saying "it might make some of the classmates feel better" (expressing empathy for students like Emily).

The second class expressed a twist to this choice. In the initial conversation the students talked about this choice not being helpful because it would make the students angrier which might lead to being suspended. But then one student talked about having a hard time concentrating in her class because some students were talking. She asked her teacher if she could go to ISS (detention) because it was quiet and she could concentrate. In this example, the *good student* went to ISS to get out of a disruptive class environment. This led to other students talking about good students going to ISS to take a test so they could concentrate better. I found this aspect of the conversation fascinating as the students were turning the use of ISS on its head—it became a quiet place for the diligent students rather than a punishment for the disruptive ones.

Choice 4: The teacher can talk to the students about why it is important to listen

Most of the students in both classes thought this was a good choice. Some thought it was helpful because it would help Emily not be so sad. Some thought it would help the students learn better. One student thought it would help the children focus better. A student in the second class said that

her teacher tells the class that she is sad when the class is being bad. I asked if that helped the class do better and she responded, "yes." One boy said that the teacher should tell them "please be quiet; if you tell them to be quiet they should." A girl said "maybe the teacher could say you might be held back for not learning." The teacher, therefore, could help the students think about consequences. One student in the first class said he didn't think it was a good idea for the teacher to talk with the class. He thought that if she talks to the class too much she has to yell and that leads to privileges being taken away.

The students in both classes knew what SOAR stood for. When I asked them to provide examples of what SOARing behavior looks like, the second class answered more generically and similarly to the first-grade students. They talked about being helpful if someone is hurt, helping a friend, and helping others. The first class was able to connect SOARing behavior with the role play scenario. They said that SOARing behavior would include listening, not talking, and saying I'm sorry for talking and asking to be friends again if you made someone sad for talking too much.

Overall Observations

The issue of how a teacher can productively redirect disruptive behavior is one that adults (educators and parents alike) grapple with. In the conversations that adults often have, there tend to be perspectives that focus on consequences and punishment and perspectives that focus on positive redirection. As I listened closely to the videotapes of each class, I was struck by how similar the perspectives of five to seven year-olds are to the adults wrestling with this issue.

All three grade-levels were able to talk about the usefulness, or lack thereof, of punishment, whether that included taking away recess, or parents finding out, or children being sent to the Principal's office. Even the five year-olds were able to make some distinctions between punishment that might deter future bad behavior (taking away something that the child really likes) and punishment that might make the situation worse (taking away recess when children need to productively channel their excess energy or punishing all children because of one or two students). They were also able to talk about some of the downside of punishment: children who are punished may become angry which fuels bad behavior. They could also imagine scenarios in which a child would attempt to hide "evidence of bad behavior" (a note sent home) from a parent because they didn't want to get in trouble. What I observed throughout these conversations is that each grade level is able to develop and elaborate more thoroughly on ideas and possible scenarios as the children get older; however, the overall themes were remarkably consistent across all grade levels.

There was also a group of students in every grade level that believed redirecting unwanted behavior was preferable to punishment. This especially came up in the discussion of the fourth option of the teacher talking with the students about why disruptive talking is a problem. Many of these conversations focused on the emotional outcomes of feeling better about oneself if disruptive behavior could be managed without punishment.

Regardless of the position a child was taking on the topic, I found their overall ideas to be remarkably consistent with what an adult might say about the best way to redirect unwanted behavior. This is confirmation about the ability of even five year-olds to have some idea of what certain actions might produce based on a sequence of events.

What wasn't apparent, except for a child or two in each grade, was a notion of "empathy" for the teacher or for Emily showing distress by Amy's disruptive behavior. The children who did express empathy did so in the context of wanting to help Emily or the teacher feel happy again. Having said that, there were occasional indirect expressions of empathy when the children talked about redirecting disruptive behavior so the other students would learn and get to the next grade level.

I also observed a continuum of knowledge about SOAR and SOARing behavior. When three children referred to SOAR during the discussion of the choices, they used the term in a way that reinforced SOARing or non-SOARing *behaviors* and *actions* associated with listening. This confirms that at least a few of the children understand SOAR in this particular context. When I talked with the children about SOAR at the conclusion of our discussion, it was clear that many/most of the children could tell me what SOARing behavior looks like in generic or limited contexts—helping other students, helping children when they fall on the playground, keeping hands and feet to themselves, etc. What they weren't able to do, with the exception of four children, was to provide examples of SOARing behavior in the specific situation that we were discussing. It was only when the puppet Amy apologized to Emily for making her sad and Emily accepted Amy's apology and said that she felt better that the students could name "saying I'm sorry" and "listening when the teacher asks you to" as examples of SOAR.

Third Modified Deliberation: Showing Kindness

On April 30, 2015 I met with two kindergarten classes, two first-grade classes and two second-grade classes for a third “modified deliberation” on the topic of showing kindness. I chose this topic in consultation with the teachers. In addition to the typical reasons that showing kindness is a useful topic for children to talk about, one of the first-grade and second-grade teachers told me that two sisters in each of their classes had recently lost their father and grandfather in a terrible and unforeseen tragedy. Both of the teachers were trying to coach their students about how to show kindness to the girls, but the students were still unsure about how to respond. We thought that doing a role-play scenario about losing something important would provide an opportunity for the students to be in a different “person position” with respect to showing kindness.

I was also interested in using this discussion for two additional purposes. First, I wanted to see how well the children could tell me what SOAR stands for and how to translate SOARing behavior into this specific scenario of showing kindness. I also wanted to use this situation to test the children’s ability to loosely “name and frame” their own options for how Hank and Emily (two puppets in the role play) might act. Unlike the first two modified deliberations, I wanted the children to tell me what Hank and Emily can do rather than having the options already available for them to discuss. I also wanted them to “coach” the puppets on specific ways to act. Therefore, these discussions will also involve students coming to the front of the room to coach Hank or Emily about what to say and do.

A Description of the Scenario

I had three volunteer women help with the scenario. Each woman had a puppet that was the age of the children in the class with whom we were working. The first puppet I introduced was Rico. I told the students that he is sitting by himself at recess looking very sad (the sad and teary face of the puppet is exposed to the children). Rico is holding an 8 ½ x 11 picture of him hugging his cute little white dog. The woman role-playing the puppet Rico is sitting by herself in the classroom. The other two puppets are classmates of Rico. I introduce each of these puppets as Emily and Hank. I told the students that these three puppets are classmates. Hank and Emily are friends who are going to play together on the swings.

When I asked the students what they noticed about Rico, they immediately said that Rico is sad. When I asked them how they know, they pointed out the sad face and tears. I asked them to guess why Rico might be sad. Most

students said that his dog must have died, or his dog got lost, or he is sick. I told them that Rico's dog has just died and his dog is very special to him.

I asked the students to watch what happens when these children are on the playground. I told them that Hank and Emily will need their help. But before we began the role-play, I asked them to remind me what SOAR stands for and to give me examples of what it looks like (more about this later in the summary). I told them that Hank and Emily will need their help with SOARing behavior.

Once we completed the discussion about SOAR, the role-play began. Emily and Hank begin talking about going over to the swings to play. As they walk by Rico, Emily whispers to Hank that Rico looks sad. Hank tells Emily that Rico's dog just died. Emily says, "what should we do?" Hank says that he doesn't know so why don't they just walk quickly past Rico and go play. Emily says that doesn't feel like SOARing behavior, but she doesn't know what SOARing would look like. Hank says he doesn't know either. We stop the role-play and I turn to the students and ask them to help Hank and Emily think of three to four responses that would look like SOARing behavior.

Kindergarten Classes

Class #1: 15 Children—6 girls and 9 boys

Unfortunately, the videographer thought she had turned the video on but she didn't realize until the conclusion of the second role-play that the video was on stand-by. From memory I know the children talked about giving Rico a hug, asking Rico to play with them on the swings, asking about Rico's puppy, and getting him a dog.

The video camera was turned on after we completed the two coached practice role-plays. A girl sitting in front of me had sparkles in her hand and she asked if she could give them to Rico to help him feel better. She walked over and put the sparkles in the puppet's hands. Eleven children walked over to Rico to see the sparkles. While this was happening, another girl got some real coins from her backpack and gave them to Rico. She said the money might help Rico buy a toy dog. A second girl gave Rico coins. A boy gave Rico his racecar to play with. And then nine children walked over to Rico to give him their "cougar bucks" (this is fake money that the children get when they are rewarded for something. They can use their cougar bucks to buy toys and items that the school "sells them"). What we witnessed was an example of the children mimicking each other in their generosity toward Rico. And what the children did was quite different than the choices they came up with and their coached-practice role-plays.

Class #2: 15 Children—4 girls and 11 boys

When I asked the children to tell me what SOAR stands for, they could repeat the entire acronym of **S**ense what's around you; **O**pen your hands to help others; **A**ct with kindness; **R**espect other people. When I asked them to give me examples of what each letter of SOAR looks like, they spoke in more general terms. A boy said that Sense what's around you means you're looking. Another boy said that Open your hands to help others would look like asking you if you're ok. A third boy said that Acting with kindness means you're respecting other people. A fourth boy said that respecting other people looks like you are SOARing. When I asked the last boy what he would be doing if he were SOARing, he had a difficult time giving me an example. I followed up by asking if listening to someone who is talking is an example of SOARing. The class responded in unison, yes. I asked if they are playing nicely are they SOARing? They responded in unison, yes.

When I asked the children to help Emily and Hank think of three to four ways they could respond to Rico that showed SOARing behavior, they said the following (loosely naming and framing):

#1: *Ask Rico to play.* Four boys and a girl suggested this as a choice. Boy—they could ask Rico to play on the swings. Boy—they could ask Rico to play tag. Boy—they could play spiders (another boy acts out being a spider). Girl—they could play freeze tag. Boy—they could play tag.

#2: *Replace the dog.* Two girls and two boys suggested a variation on the theme of finding a replacement animal for Rico. Girl—they could give him a new dog. Boy—they could give Rico a dog to play with. Boy—they could buy two dogs. Girl—they could ask Rico if he likes cats.

#3: *Ask if Rico is OK.* A boy suggested this idea.

#4: *Invite Rico over to their house.* A boy suggested this idea.

There was very little elaboration on the ideas, although the first two options included several children reinforcing these as a good idea.

For all six classes: After the students gave me three to four possible choices for how Hank and Emily could show kindness to Rico, I asked students to volunteer to “coach” Hank and Emily on one possible action to take. Most of the students wanted to participate in coaching the puppets so there was quite a bit of enthusiasm during this part of the activity (this was the case in every class!). After I chose two students, each would stand next to the puppet and tell the puppet what to do. The volunteer women were very good at asking questions to make sure that they represented the students' suggestions. The role-play was also done very effectively, with Rico talking about why he was sad and what the puppets were doing to help him feel

better. Overall, the students in each class were quite interested and attentive during the role-play activities. The second graders seemed to maintain their interest without as much squirming as the first graders and kindergarteners.

Kindergarten class #2:

First role-play

A girl coached Emily to give Rico a hug.

A boy coached Hank to go up and say hi and show kindness.

Second role-play

A boy coached Hank to give Rico a stuffed poodle (he used another stuffed animal that was in the class and said it was a pretend poodle).

A girl coached Emily to ask if Rico is ok and to give him a hug.

Third role-play

After the second role-play a boy said, “he could say I’m sorry you lost your dog.” I asked him to come up and coach Hank. Another boy came up to coach Emily. He suggested that Emily ask if Rico wants to play on the slide together.

Note that some of the role-play suggestions were new ideas; the children had not suggested that Emily and Hank give Rico a hug prior to the role-play activity, or to say I’m sorry you lost your dog.

First-Grade classes

Class #1: 14 students—5 girls and 9 boys

When I asked the children to tell me what SOAR stands for, they could repeat the entire acronym of **S**ense what’s around you; **O**pen your hands to help others; **A**ct with kindness; **R**espect other people. When I asked them to give me examples of what each letter of SOAR looks like, a student said that if you are sensing what’s around you, you aren’t hitting anyone. For the O; A; R they had a harder time giving specific examples although they talked about helping others. When I asked for examples they said, helping someone who is hurt or breaking up friends who are fighting and helping them to be friends again.

When I asked the children to help Emily and Hank think of three to four ways they could respond to Rico that showed SOARing behavior, they said the following:

#1: *Say I’m sorry.* Three girls suggested that the puppets tell Rico they are sorry his dog has died.

#2: *Replace the dog.* One girl suggested that Rico could get another dog just like the one who died and he could call the dog Rico. A boy thought a nice present to give Rico would be another dog. When I asked if it would be a real dog or a stuffed dog, several students in the class responded. Some said real and others said stuffed.

#3: *Cheer Rico up with humor.* Three boys talked about telling a funny joke or helping Rico laugh. A girl said that the puppets could act like a clown and act goofy.

The coached practice role-plays included the following:

First Role-Play:

Two boys coached Hank and Emily. One boy told Hank to give Rico a hug. The second boy coached Emily to hug Rico and give him a present.

Second Role-Play:

A boy coached Hank to give Rico a hug and tell him I hope you feel better. A girl coached Emily to ask Rico how he is feeling. She also wanted Emily to tell Rico that she is sorry his dog has died and she has a dog for him (there was a stuffed dog in the class that the girl gave to Emily to give to Rico).

Similarly to the kindergarten students, these first graders didn't include giving a hug to Rico as a possible choice, although they coached Hank and Emily to do so. Both scenarios also included inquiring about Rico's emotional state, although none of the choices suggested this as an option.

After the students watched the role-play activities and observed how Emily and Hank talked with Rico, the students began telling me about being sad when their dog, various pets, and a grandmother died.

Class #2: 13 Students—8 girls and 5 boys

When I asked the children to tell me what SOAR stands for, they could repeat the entire acronym of **S**ense what's around you; **O**pen your hands to help others; **A**ct with kindness; **R**espect other people. When I asked them to give me examples of what each letter of SOAR looks like, this class was able to give me specific examples. One student said that sensing what's around you would help you know when someone is sad. Another student said that opening your hands to help others would look like helping someone up if they fall. For acting with kindness, a student gave me a scenario. She said, "pretend there is a bully. You act like you respect them. And you be really kind to other people. And you move them (the kids who are being bullied) over there (points in a certain direction) and say I'm going to stop that." A

student said that being nice to others is an example of respecting other people. These are six year olds!

When I asked the children to help Emily and Hank think of three to four ways they could respond to Rico that showed SOARing behavior, they said the following:

Choice #1: *Replace the dog.* Two girls and one boy talked about replacing Rico's dog. One girl suggested giving Rico a new puppy that looks like the picture (points to the picture of Rico with his dog) but a little different. Another girl suggested giving Rico a new puppy with similar eyes and ears. A boy suggested that the puppets buy a new dog and a new toy for Rico.

Choice #2: *Encourage Rico not to forget his dog.* This was suggested by a boy and this theme was reinforced in both of the coached practice role-plays.

Choice #3: *Give Rico a hug.* One student suggested this.

During the discussion of how the puppets can help Rico feel better, several children began talking about deaths they have experienced. The girl who lost her father and grandfather spoke up and said her dad had died. Other children talked about losing pets and a grandparent.

The coached practice role-plays included the following:

First Role-Play:

Two girls gave instructions to Emily and Hank. One girl (her Father had died) coached Hank to give Rico a hug and tell him to not forget his dog. The second girl coached Emily to give Rico a big hug and say that she's sad that Rico's dog died.

Second Role-Play:

A boy coached Hank to tell Rico he's sorry his dog has died. He also wanted Hank to tell Rico he would help him get a new puppy. A girl coached Emily to say don't forget your dog. And I'll be your friend forever.

The children wanted to do a third role-play:

A girl coached Emily to tell Rico how sad she is that his dog died. Then she told Emily she had an idea; let's go play. A boy coached Hank to give Rico a hug. He also wanted Hank to tell Rico that he lost his dog and he knows how Rico feels.

The idea of asking Rico to play was not mentioned as a possible choice although it was suggested in the third coached practice session. One theme

throughout the role-plays was attuning to the emotions of Rico and supporting him through hugs and expressions of sadness.

Second-Grade Classes

Class #1: 21 students—9 Girls and 11 boys

When I asked the children to tell me what SOAR stands for, they could repeat the entire acronym of **S**ense what's around you; **O**pen your hands to help others; **A**ct with kindness; **R**espect other people. When I asked them to give me examples of what each letter of SOAR looks like, one child said that being aware is an example of sensing what is around you. Another student said that helping others is an example of opening your hands to help others. For acting with kindness and respecting other people, two students said you would be nice to people. A boy said that he SOARs when his family goes camping. When I asked him what that looks like, with some prompting, he told me that he gets wood to help build a fire.

When I set up the scenario and introduced the students to Rico, four children (3 girls and a boy) responded by saying: her dad died; her dog died; her cousin's puppy died; her dog ran away, got hurt, and died; and, his two guinea pigs died.

When I asked the children to help Emily and Hank think of three to four ways they could respond to Rico that showed SOARing behavior, they said the following:

#1: *Ask how Rico is doing.* A girl said, go over to Rico and say are you OK? You could give him a hug and say I'm sorry your dog died.

#2: *Replace the dog.* A girl suggested to give Rico a new dog to play with. A boy said if one of them had a toy dog they could give it to him to play with.

#3: *Ask Rico to play.* Two girls and a boy talked about this option. Boy—they can go and ask him to play and stay with him throughout the day. Girl—they could play together and ask about the dog. Girl—after giving him a hug, say you're sorry and ask him to play.

The coached practice role-plays included the following:

First Role-Play:

A girl gave these instructions to Emily: Give Rico a stuffed dog and ask him if he wants to play.

A boy instructed Hank to follow Emily's lead by helping Emily give Rico the stuffed dog.

Second Role-Play:

A girl instructed Hank to ask Rico to play on the slide and then to play house. Hank can be the dad, Emily can be the mom and Rico can be the dog. A boy instructed Emily to ask to play and then ask to sit with him at lunch.

This is the first class in which the choices and the role-play scenarios were consistent.

Class #2: 22 Students—13 girls and 9 boys

When I asked the children to tell me what SOAR stands for, they could repeat the entire acronym of **S**ense what's around you; **O**pen your hands to help others; **A**ct with kindness; **R**espect other people. When I asked them to give me examples of what each letter of SOAR looks like they had a difficult time naming specific behaviors consistent with sensing what's around you. This class lumped together the O and A of soar by providing two examples. One boy said "when people are sad and you want to help them feel better". A girl said "when someone is picking on other people, we would say, stop!" For respecting other people, a student said to pay attention when they are talking and be nice.

When I asked the children to help Emily and Hank think of three to four ways they could respond to Rico that showed SOARing behavior, they said the following:

#1: *Ask Rico to play.* Three girls and one boy talked about asking Rico to play. A fourth girl said if Rico doesn't want to play, ask if he's ok.

#2: *Replace the dog.* Two girls and a boy thought this was a good idea. Girl—they could help Rico get another dog. Boy—they could buy another dog for Rico; a puppy to sleep with. Girl—that could help cheer up Rico.

#3: *Inquire about the dog.* Two girls suggested this choice. Girl—they could ask Rico what his dog was like. Girl—they could ask, what was the dog's name? How old was the dog?

#4: *Say I'm sorry.* A boy said they could say I'm sorry your dog died. I hope you feel better soon.

The coached practice role-plays included the following:

First Role-Play:

Two girls wanted to coach Hank and Emily. One girl was very quiet once she was in front of the room and wasn't sure what to say. The second girl coached the puppets to go to Rico and say I'm sorry.

Second Role-Play:

A boy coached Hank by suggesting he ask Rico about the dog.

A girl coaching Emily suggested that she ask Rico to play and then they could go to the pet store after school to look at dogs.

After the role-plays one boy said, “if I see someone sad I will try to make him happy.”

The suggestions in the coached practice role-plays were consistent with the choices the students talked about.

Reflections on this Deliberation

In *Making Choices Together: The Power of Public Deliberation*⁵, David Matthews and Noelle McAfee say, “for democratic politics to operate as it should...people must act together as a public”. If we unpack this statement, democratic politics operating “as it should” requires that citizens and elected officials are *acting together* in the service of the “common good.” Acting together in the service of the common good requires “relational” skills and abilities. And since these skills must be taught and practiced over and over again, these “modified deliberations” provide one example of how to help children develop these crucial skills.

I was curious to know if these children were able to come up with three to four different choices for how Hank and Emily could act. Furthermore, did these choices provide a way for the puppets to “act together” in the service of the “common good” (helping Rico know that he is part of a school community that cares)? I think the answer to this question is a resounding “yes” (I’ll say more about this shortly). Additionally, I wondered how realistic these choices would be in their implementation? The answer to this is mixed. The choice that was suggested the most and by every grade is the most unrealistic: Buying a new dog for Rico (all grades mentioned this in every class). All of the other choices that were mentioned are realistic: Ask Rico to play (2 grades mentioned this four different times); give Rico a hug (two grades mentioned this three different times); and, say “I’m sorry” (two grades mentioned this, one time each). A number of single classes mentioned the following as a possible choice: use humor; tell Rico not to forget his dog; invite Rico to their house to play; inquire about the dog; and, ask how Rico is doing.

The coached practice role-play situations provided an opportunity to observe to what extent the children followed-up with their suggested choices, or if new ways of responding would emerge. As I indicated in the

⁵ David Matthews and Noelle McAfee, “Making Choices Together: The Power of Public Deliberation” (Dayton, Ohio: The Kettering Foundation, 1999).

summary of the role-plays, only the second grade classes were consistent in their choices and coached practice sessions. One explanation may be the developmental and cognitive abilities of the second grade children to move from a “third person” position of thinking about ideas to a “first person” perspective of acting them out. Another explanation may be that a “first person” coaching perspective opens up new and different ways to respond that conceptualizing alone doesn’t provide. The most frequent response in the role-plays was to give Rico a hug (all kindergarten and first grade classes suggested this in the role plays and both kindergarten classes and one of the first grade classes suggested this as a possible choice). Interestingly, not one of the second grade classes suggested this as a possible choice or as a possible role-play. Perhaps this points to the “embodied experience” of younger children in which hugging is permissible, and perhaps even encouraged. As children get older, embodied possibilities (full body, right brain responses) are less encouraged while cognition (analytical, left brain responses) is privileged.

Having said that, what I noticed is three overall categories across the role-play activities that represent “acting together for the common good”. The first category deals with *actions that minimize Rico’s sadness*. The most popular choice was giving Rico another dog, or pet (one student wondered about a cat), or a stuffed animal. Although replacing the dog is the most unrealistic option that the students presented, it represents a choice that is meant to help Rico feel better because he has a new animal in his life. The realistic aspect of this option was providing a stuffed animal to help replace Rico’s dog. One class in all three grades suggested this as a role-play option.

The second category involves choices and actions that *show compassion and empathy*. The choices included, giving Rico a hug, asking Rico how he is doing, saying I’m sorry, inquiring how the dog died, and encouraging Rico to never forget his dog. The role-play suggestions included many examples such as, giving Rico a hug, saying I’m sorry, and saying they hoped he would feel better soon. Every grade level included one of these suggestions or role-plays in their discussion.

The third category included actions that *encourage Rico to join the community* (his peers). Every second grade class included “ask Rico to play” in their coached practice role-play. Both kindergarten classes included this as a choice and one kindergarten class suggested that Rico come to the puppet’s house to play.

“Acting together for the common good” requires relational skills and abilities. The exercise of loosely naming and framing options and the coached practice role-plays were all in the service of showing kindness to Rico. What we need to continue to do is nurture what the children already seem to know about how to help a classmate feel better, so they can act more consistently into these difficult and complex situations.

