ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the observed and reported experiences of a teacher and her 22 first grade students who were given the opportunity to develop leadership skills through explicit instruction in an ubiquitous approach and to practice these skills in authentic situations within the classroom. The study took place in a regular classroom in a large, diverse suburban elementary school and included students who were learning English as a second language. The students’ families came from Russia, Brazil, Afghanistan, China, India, Peru, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and the United States. The children were taught seven “Habits of Leadership” through class discussions of literary characters and real-life models. The students then applied these “habits” by giving suggestions and making decisions so the classroom would run more effectively as a whole and so that individuals made better behavior choices. The students also set goals, practiced the skills in team-building activities, and performed jobs in the classroom. Methods of data collection included teacher observations, interviews, surveys, and student work. The study’s findings suggested that most of the students grew in confidence and felt a sense of belonging within the classroom that in turn prompted more responsible behavior and more effectively supported their learning.