

Chopra, Kamal

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# Impact of positive self-talk

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**IMPACT OF POSITIVE SELF-TALK**

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**IMPACT OF POSITIVE SELF-TALK**

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I dedicate this work to my students  
who have taught me so much and through them  
have given me the gift of teaching  
self-talk!

I dedicate this work to my friends  
family, and fiancé who have always stood  
by me through thick and thin and have  
loved me and believed in me unconditionally!

## **Abstract**

On a daily basis, whether young or old, people are engaged in self-talk. Our thoughts have implications that affect our emotions, motivation and potential accomplishments. Research has shown that the majority of our self-talk is negative therefore, is working against us rather than for us (Helmstetter, 1982; Stranulis & Manning, 2002). These negative thoughts create feelings of anger, irritation, frustration, hopelessness and disappointment. The aim of this study was to teach grade one students how to rethink their negative self-talk and turn it into positive self-talk. The students engaged in a year-long series of lessons about self-talk and learned how to identify specific negative and positive words and affirmations. At the end of the school year the students participated in a one to-one qualitative interview with the teacher/researcher to highlight new meta-cognitive strategies attained and implemented. Through a coding procedure, the data analysis confirmed that the students needed to learn and understand a three-level process in order to acquire positive self-talk. First, they needed to develop an awareness of the nature of self-talk, both positive and negative. Second, they needed to acquire new strategies to change negative self-talk into positive self-talk and third, they needed to implement positive self-talk into their daily interactions. This study revealed that the new strategies learned impacted the students' abilities to successfully rethink negative statements to positive statements and to consider the value of doing so in their lives. This life-impacting skill has the potential to change perspectives, attitudes, and reactions in regard to one self, to others and to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. In this way, the study demonstrated that even very young students are in control of themselves by consciously feeding their minds with positive empowering self-talk.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Self-talk* is one way to describe the statements, conversations, and thoughts that we say about others and ourselves in our minds or out loud. We speak affirmations to ourselves continuously throughout the day while doing various activities: watching television, going to the mall, reading, listening to music, learning at school, and talking with friends. The words we speak to ourselves impact our well-being, feelings and emotions. Our self-talk can be helpful or harmful depending on the words we choose to use. Self-talk can increase our self-esteem or confidence, “I am healthy and strong,” or make us feel inadequate or unworthy, “I am fat and suck.” These statements seem harmless but both, whether negative or positive, have a powerful impact on our beliefs, self-image, motivation and capabilities. Furthermore, these words impact our emotions. Neck and Manz (1992) state “individuals . . . engage in both negative and positive chains of thought (habitual ways of thinking) that affect emotional . . . reactions” (p. 689). Our thoughts and emotions are interconnected.

Awareness of and paying attention to our thoughts makes us more actively involved in taking charge of our self-talk. This is referred to as meta-cognition, which is the awareness of one’s thoughts (Mango, 2009, p. 233) and the awareness of one’s mental processes (Wilson & Bai, 2010, p. 270). Toland and Boyle (2008) indicated the importance of children monitoring themselves so they become more aware of their automatic thoughts. This heightened awareness leads to a greater chance of solving problems if they are “aware of their cognition and are able to use such awareness to control and regulate the problem solving process” (Lee, Teo & Bergin, 2009, p. 91). Meta-cognition and reflection enable us to see how our self-talk has a profound effect on

our feelings and beliefs. By thinking about thinking, it is possible to consciously change the negative words that evoke feelings of angry and sadness to the positive words that empower us and create joyous emotions. We gain the power to create healthy self-esteem, a positive self-image, and enjoy a positive emotional state. In addition, we begin to recognize our own progress, abilities and achievements in all areas of life through positive self-talk. We control our inner dialogue by replacing negative words with constructive positive words. Positive thinking has the potential to encourage active learning, enhance confidence and perseverance and enable the creation of skilled problem solvers (Hannell, 2004; Neck & Manz, 1992; Stanulis & Manning, 2002).

### **Background**

I have experienced and witnessed the life-changing impact of positive self-talk. Before this discovery, in my constant state of worrying, I was diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety at the age of 18. During the seven years that followed, I desperately tried to find anything that would help to change my state of being. I took prescribed medication; I saw a couple of psychologists and a psychiatrist. Externally I had everything I wanted, yet internally I felt helplessly out of control and saw that my inner world was falling apart. There was nowhere to hide or breathe; anxiety consumed my mind and followed me everywhere I went. My future seemed and felt bleak. The medication I took helped me for approximately two years. Then somehow anxiety found its way back into my life while I was on the medication; it was no longer working for my body or mind. I decided to wean myself off of the medication and desperately hoped there was something out there to get rid of my anxiety.

One day, unintentionally, I found a book by Lucinda Bassett called *Panic to Power*. I remember reading this quote in her book, “I consider my anxiety a gift. Yes, that’s right. A gift” (Bassett, 1995, p. xiiv). Initially, when I read this quote, I immediately closed the book because inwardly I felt extremely angry and resentful. I wondered how someone could say this constant pain and angst was a gift? It took me months to work through my anxiety using her self-help program which I purchased after I read her book. The transformation I experienced that resulted from the program made it clear in my mind what she meant by anxiety being a gift.

That intense emotional pain of anxiety I experienced led me to my greatest discovery: I am in control of my inner state of mind. The information I read and learned from, brought to my attention how my thoughts impacted my reality and emotions. The change I had to make and the skill I had to learn was positive empowering self-talk. Bassett stated, “when you learn compassionate self-talk . . . it literally will change your life” (pp. 148-149). This awareness, new knowledge and consistent implementation of positive self-talk transformed my continuous state of anxiousness, into living serenely and in total control of my thoughts. I learned how to rethink, rephrase and retrain my thoughts.

This experience and new understanding inspired me to share the knowledge I gained with my students. I wanted to teach them the powerful tool of positive self-talk so they too could benefit from the impact it could have on their emotional, academic, social and behavioral well-being. I recognized that this would not avoid struggles and challenges in their lives but would support them and help to build internal strength to overcome and persevere in school and beyond.

For me and for others, positive self-talk gives us greater control of our thoughts and also gives us applicable real life skills. This life-impacting skill can change our perspective, attitude and reaction to ourselves, to others, and to the circumstances we experience. Essentially, we build self-assurance about our abilities and ourselves. We can “undertake more ambitious goals and persist in the face of adversity” (Bénabou & Tirole, p. 872). By identifying our negative thoughts and rethinking them we change our understandings of who we are and what we are capable of doing.

During my reading, I found that there was not an extensive amount of research on positive self-talk for children or “*how to*” strategies. There is a limited amount of research providing children with explicit instructions and step-by-step guidance to help them become more aware and to rethink their self-talk. I, therefore, undertook this study to understand the positive impact that teaching new meta-cognitive strategies could have on a group of grade one students. Positive empowering self-talk changed my life and I felt that it would have a profound effect on children as well.

### **The Research Question**

The research question for this study was: What impact does teaching particular strategies for learning positive self-talk have on Grade 1 students?

### **Terms and Definitions**

- **Meta-cognition:** The awareness of one’s thoughts (Mango, 2009, p. 233) and an awareness of one’s mental processes (Wilson & Bai, 2010, p. 270). It is an active process of consciously regulating and monitoring cognitive and affective processes (Flavell, n.d, para. 3). In addition it is “intentional, conscious, foresighted, purposeful, and directed at accomplishing a goal or outcome” (Flavell, n.d, para. 2).

- **Self-talk:** The phrases, statements, conversations, and thoughts that we say about others and ourselves in our minds or out loud. The words we think or say can create either negative emotions (irritation, frustration, anger, annoyance) or positive emotions (joy, peace, love, excitement, encouragement). This affects the way we interpret situations and what we are capable of achieving.
- **Strategies:** Methods or tools that help create awareness and changes to the way one thinks, perceives and reacts from negative (feeling inadequate) to positive (feeling worthy and skilled). An effective tool to help children and/or adults rethink their thoughts is targeting specific negative words they choose to say in their minds and out loud and replacing them with words that are positive.
- **Impact:** The effect new positive words have on people's thinking, beliefs, understandings, emotions and/or reactions to situations and circumstances.
- **Positive:** Thinking or saying certain words that creates a helpful and encouraging state of mind with feelings of joy, hope, calmness and/or love.
- **Negative:** Thinking or saying certain words that creates a hurtful or discouraged state of mind with feelings of sadness, angry, frustration and/or irritation.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

During my research, a variety of sources were found in the literature that had a section about or made some reference to self-talk. There were also research articles that focused on cognition and self-talk when linked to children who were diagnosed with anxiety, autism, or depression. In addition, the research that has been conducted on self-talk and cognitive-restructuring was geared towards older students and adolescents. This study is significant because it recognizes that self-talk is an important concept for

*everyone* to learn and it commences in the early years of childhood. In addition, it recognizes that positive self-talk strategies can be understood, taught and implemented at a young age.

This chapter reviews the literature on self-talk that guided my awareness and understanding of this topic throughout this study. The first part of this chapter reviews what self-talk is, the significance of self-talk and the impact it has on children's education. Next, the importance of teaching self-talk was developed by exploring the impact various relationships have on children's self-talk. Following this, I examined why it is important to understand and learn about self-talk and then implement in children's education.

### **Self-talk**

Self-talk includes the words and phrases that we say to others and ourselves, internally or externally, which can be either negative or positive. Self-talk can be "spoken in words or unspoken in thoughts" (Helmstetter, 1982, p. 48). Burnett (1995) defined it as "what people say to themselves with particular emphasis on the words used to express thoughts and beliefs about oneself and the world to oneself" (p. 2).

Self-talk occurs on a daily basis whether we are consciously aware of it or not. Most of us are unaware or unconscious of our thoughts (Helmstetter, 1982, p. 48). This is because our thoughts are habitual and are automatically occurring. Our self-talk affects our moods, behaviors and attitudes. Unfortunately, the majority of our self-talk works against us rather than for us. In 1982, Helmstetter indicated that "as much as seventy-seven percent of everything we think is negative, counterproductive, and works against us" (p. 21). Twenty years later, Stanulis and Manning (2002) stated that, "individuals

make about 55,000 self-talk utterances each day” and that “75% of our daily self-talk works against us” (p. 6). This reveals that our daily self-talk is stagnate and that most of what we say to ourselves continues to be counterproductive.

There can be many causes as to why negative self-talk has been more prevalent over the years. Helmstetter (1982) shares that the negative programming stems from parents, siblings, schoolmates, the people we work with, life mates, advertisements, paper, magazines and the news (p. 21). In addition, technology has made profound progress over the years, which has lead to more easily accessible information to all ages through the computer and Internet access. Regardless of these advances, this negativity could be present because of its cyclical nature of being passed down from generation to generation. Over the years, this “norm” has caused many negative implications for our society and has created “self-traps” (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002, p. 875). We have surrounded ourselves with negative self-talk, which may hinder achievement, happiness and success.

### **Positive and Negative Self-talk**

There are two types of habitual thinking patterns: negative (pessimism) and positive (optimism). Neck and Manz (1992) discuss the dichotomy between these thought patterns as “opportunity thinking” (optimism: constructive, seeing challenges as worthwhile pursuits and emphasis placed on opportunities in situations) and “obstacle thinking” (pessimism: emphasis is placed on the negative aspects or problems in situations). Bassett (1995) also differentiates between positive and negative self-talk. She coined the terminology “compassionate self-talk” as “any kind of message or dialogue with yourself or someone else that makes you feel good, strong, happy, confident,

relaxed, capable, loving, energetic, peaceful, or motivated” (p. 147). She discussed the power of positive and negative thinking and how it is a direct cause of the way we feel. Bassett stated (1995), “your negative thoughts are a direct cause for lack of inspiration, chronic lethargy, depression and a feeling of being too drained to even go on trying” (p. 149). These negative emotions stem from feelings of failure or not feeling good enough (Cheavens, Feldman, Gum, Michael & Synder, 2006). Futhermore, the two types of thoughts create very different emotional states (Neck & Manz, 1992, p. 693).

### **Self-talk in Education**

Self-talk is prevalent in all aspects of life and exists in classrooms across all curricular areas and interactions. As mentioned above, there are two paths or perspectives that a person can take: “I am capable” (able) or “I can’t do this” (enable). In education, “when outcomes seem unattainable, people withdraw their effort and disengage themselves from their goals” (Scheier & Carver, 1993, p. 26). This is because students may feel discouraged and think, “I can’t do this. This is too hard.” These thoughts affect student motivation, achievement and behavior.

When people are more optimistic or confident they are able to use and implement coping techniques, which will help them find solutions to challenges (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002; Curry & Russ, 1985; Scheier & Carver, 1993). In addition, confidence helps build and maintain self-esteem because students believe in themselves and their abilities (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002). When people are able to build positive self-talk the “feelings of self-worth are built on solid foundations that do not require continual validation” (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002, p. 884). In addition, positive self-talk creates, according to Zimmerman (1989), “self-regulated learners [that] are meta-cognitively, motivationally,

and behaviorally active participants in their academic achievement” (cited in Stanulis & Manning, 2002, p. 4). When students feel better inside themselves about their abilities, they do better in their environment. As Nelsen (2006) clearly states, “children do better when they feel better.” (p. 111). Children will feel better when they think and say positive statements about themselves. The result creates learners who are capable and confident in their abilities wherever they may be on the continuum of learning.

### **Importance of Using Positive Words**

In *Tongue Fu! at School*, Horn (2004) emphasizes the importance of language and the words we choose to speak with others. She has been working on the betterment of individuals and organizations communication since 1981 and is the president of Actions Seminars/Consulting (Horn, 2002, p. 244). Horn (2004) gives a list of many words to stop using and shares what words to use instead. Helmstetter (1982) and Bassett (1995) confirm that negative and positive words have power. Helmstetter (1982) explains this through a number of examples of statements that are shared in his books such as, “I’m just no good! I can’t seem to get organized. I never get a break! I just can’t handle this! I already know I won’t like it” (pp. 51-53). All of the above authors’ ideas support the importance of effective communication with others and with oneself.

Horn (2004) reinforces positive self-talk by using constructive words when she states that the right word “is a form of verbal diplomacy that . . . focus[es] on solutions rather than fault, and set a positive precedent . . . that motivates others to respond in kind” (p. 3). Horn quotes the famous words of Mark Twain, “A powerful agent is the right word. Whenever we come upon one of those intensely right words, the resulting effect is physical as well as spiritual” (p. 41). The positive words, which will be discussed in the

next chapter, are the same words that these three authors discussed and are what has been extracted and simplified for the students to understand and use within themselves for this study. The purpose of this research project is to bring awareness to negative self-talk and highlight and learn “the positive-psychology” (Cheavens et al., 2006, p. 61) by teaching and learning positive self-talk in a single classroom.

### **Self-talk and Education**

There are many skills that can be attained and acquired once one is provided with accurate instructions and the right tools. Horn (2002) quotes theoretical physicist Albert Einstein whom affirmed, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking with which they were created” (p. 95). Creating positive thoughts is one of those skills that can be acquired once it is intentionally pursued and it is considered to be on a different level of thinking than that which produces negative thoughts. Horn (2004) supports this notion when she states that “getting along with people [and oneself] is a byproduct of constructive communication, and it is a skill that can be taught. Not only can it be taught-it should be taught” (p. 1). Bassett (1995) recognizes that “compassionate self-talk is like any other skill: it must be learned. You have to understand what the skill is, learn the technique, and then practice, practice, practice” (p. 148). Moreover, Stanulis and Manning (2002) highlight this when they discuss the need for elementary school teachers to “provide multiple opportunities for students to practice talking to themselves and others in positive ways that reinforce successes, and coach students to guide themselves through frustrations” (p. 6). This skill of recognizing and using positive self-talk is what will change the life scripts that we etch (Helmstetter, 1982). This means that positive self-talk changes or creates new outlooks, attitudes, and

beliefs about oneself and the situations that people may find themselves in. This skill is a life companion that is supportive and can be **used** at any time for any situation. All of the authors highlight the impact and change that positive self-talk has on individuals and their outlooks on situations and life. Therefore, it is a learned skill that needs to be purposely taught and intentionally practiced by each child because it reinforces and builds strengths as well as finds solutions that lead to new pathways and experiences. (Cheavens et al., 2006)

To successfully alter or rethink one's self-talk, students need to learn meta-cognitive strategies. Neck and Manz (1992) shared, “[children] who bring their self-defeating internal verbalizations to a level of awareness, and who re-think and re-verbalize these inner dialogues . . . enhance their performance” (p. 693). Students need to be taught to develop awareness and strategies to rethink their inner dialogues in order to successfully implement the skill of positive self-talk.

### **Relationships and Self-talk**

We live in an interdependent and influential society. Children's self-concepts and understanding of the world is impacted by the beliefs of others. Burnett (1995) conducted a study on how children's self-talk, whether negative or positive, was impacted by what teachers or parents said to them. Burnett (1995) concluded that, “children who perceived that significant others talk positively to them appeared to have higher positive self-talk and lower negative self-talk than children who reported that significant others say negative things to them” (p. 6). Stanulis and Manning (2002) point out that “many teachers serve as mental models of positive and accepting self-regulating behavior [and thoughts]” (p. 4). Hannell (2004) reinforced this by stating “much will depend on how the

student learns to view themselves in their school community” (p. 10). This reveals the power of relationships including that between a teacher and a student, and how these relationships correlate with children’s sense of self. Initially, the outer world (the voices of others) does impact the inner world (what we believe about ourselves).

Students are also influenced by their peer relationships. If teachers can cultivate a culture of caring and model to students how to speak to each other, it will also help create more cohesion and kindness in student-to-student relationships. Teachers can model and build the use of positive words in their classrooms. The more optimism that is used and reinforced, the more prevalent it will become in children’s daily interactions. The manner in which communication is encouraged or hampered can have both negative and positive effects on students. Successful relationships are based largely on caring and thoughtful communication.

### **Results of Self-talk**

Self-talk is linked to many positive results with children. Hannell (2004) emphasized the way positive thinking impacts children’s confidence (who you are), self-esteem (what you can do) and optimism (things you do well). The frequency of positive self-talk will improve children’s task performances (Stanulis & Manning, 2002; Neck & Manz, 1992). Interestingly, Hannell (2004) highlights that “many bright children have surprisingly negative perceptions of themselves” (p. 10). Their self-concept can be dependent upon an external factor (receiving high marks, stickers, and praise) versus internal factors (self-talk, encouragement). The external factor is what links them to believe that “I can do it. I am good. I am smart.” If it ceases to exist, they may feel a lack of self-worth, or feeling that “I am not good enough.” This evidence reveals the

importance of providing *all* students, regardless of academic, social-emotional and behavioral achievement, with self-talk strategies and skills to enhance their understanding of how internal dialogue influences their confidence and ability. Self-talk can boost self-worth and also humble self-concept. It all comes down to what words we choose to say when we talk to ourselves.

### **Significance of the Study**

In order to change the 75% of our daily self-talk that is working against us we need to learn what words to *lose* and what words to *use* (Horn, 2004). In my practice as a grade one and two teacher, it has been noticed that the students make multiple negative comments to themselves throughout the day. We all have habitual thinking patterns, which commence at a very young age. Through research and personal experience it has become evident that children need to be taught explicit ways to rethink negative thoughts so that their self-talk is positive. Helmstetter (1982) states, “personal responsibility is the essences of self” (p. 103). To create a positive self is to use positive self-talk. Positive self-talk directly nurtures the *self*, which then builds *self-esteem*, *self-regulation*, *self-monitoring*, *self-management*, *self-worth*, *self-determination*, *self-motivation*, *self-control*, *self-confidence*, and *self-efficacy*.

Furthermore, this study has the potential to affect teachers in their work with children. Thirty years ago, Helmstetter (1982) said it was important to add self-talk to the curriculum (p. 466). Today, I am implementing this idea in my classroom and have found that there are multiple benefits, for students and teachers, when self-talk is taught. Adding self-talk to the children’s education sets them up for long-term success in their academic careers as well as in their social interactions. It provides students with self-control

through understanding how to interpret and monitor their thoughts and feelings. Self-talk impacts students in *all* settings and aspects of their life. This tool is beneficial because it has cross-discipline applicability. It can be implemented in math, social studies, science, art, physical education, language arts and all other subject areas. It is an internal change, which affects the external reality. Self-talk is occurring all the time within students and teachers. The more positive the self-talk is used in the classroom, the more students and teachers will gain, academically, socially and emotionally. The only way we can decrease the approximately 77% of the self-talk that is currently working against us is by changing and learning the right kind of self-talk; self-talk that is constructive and optimistic.

### **Chapter 3: Method**

The goal of this study is to describe and understand the impact self-talk has on children in a grade one classroom. Specifically, it is to investigate the impact newly-acquired positive strategies will have on students' ability to identify positive and negative self-talk, change negative self-talk into positive-self-talk and reflect on the value of self-talk in their lives and daily interactions. This chapter provides an overview of the qualitative method utilized and how it was the most conducive approach to answer my research question. In addition, details of the research method and procedures are provided including the student participants' background, the self-talk lessons, the interviews conducted and the coding method, which allowed embedded themes to emerge from the data. Lastly, ethical considerations are discussed to reveal the sensitivity provided towards these participants.

## **Qualitative Research**

Sherman and Webb (2001) noted that qualitative research in education took time to receive recognition and its first considerable discussion was in the 1986, *The Handbook of Research on Teaching* (American Educational Research Association) (p. 10). As time has progressed, qualitative research has made its mark and become an accepted and valid approach in the education field. Qualitative research is a “method designed to encourage researcher’ persistent interaction with their data, while remaining constantly involved with the emerging analyses” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 1). It is an inductive endeavor, which focuses on the participant’s perspective and where evidence emerges directly from the constant comparison and analyzing of the data from the bottom up (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

There are many different methods that one can choose from when conducting qualitative research. Marshall and Rossman (2011) noted that one of the most important and extensive types of qualitative research is interviewing. Interviews construct knowledge (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) that is directly from the participant’s view. Interviews were the most appropriate form to gather data for this research question because they focused on the subjects’ views and were sensitive to the developmental abilities of this age group (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Interviews allowed the students to verbalize their ideas, understandings about self-talk and their thinking processes. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that the aim of an interview is to understand what the person you are questioning thinks. This study concentrated on self-talk through questioned interviews, which helped to illuminate what happens in the human consciousness (their self-talk).

Bogdan and Bilken (2007) describe the five features of qualitative research: (a) it is naturalistic (e.g., this research was done in a classroom which is a familiar setting for the students); (b) uses descriptive data (e.g., the students' interviews gave an abundance of insight into their psyche); (c) is concerned with the process (e.g., the interview questions coincided with the self-talk lessons that were learned and practiced throughout the year); (d) is inductive (e.g., patterns and themes emerged directly from the data); (e) and has meaning (e.g., this information creates awareness and understanding of the importance of self-talk in the early years). These features guided the design of my research project and all were intricate components of the entire process. Through the data, validity and importance emerged. The qualitative research method confirms that children can learn how to identify and rethink negative self-talk into constructive positive self-talk.

### **The Research Site**

The research project was conducted at the elementary school where I am currently employed in an urban public school. It has a population of approximately 430 students from kindergarten to grade three. This culturally diverse school consists of 85% English language learners (ELL); their descent and cultural backgrounds are predominately East Indian (speak Punjabi) and Pakistani (speak Urdu). This was the first year of operation for this school since it opened in September 2010. This is a collaborative school setting where teachers plan and teach in teams. The school is academically driven placing a strong emphasis on students' literacy abilities. The character education implemented is based on The Virtues Project (Popov, 2000). This project is designed for educators to provide tools and strategies "to help them shape character by creating a positive,

empowering culture or environment in which children are learning and growing” (Popov, 2000, p. xvi). These virtues are universal and are applicable to all cultures because the focus is on what is innately within us.

### **The Classroom Setting**

This school has both open (2 classrooms that have an open wall that connects them to each other) and closed classrooms (a single classroom and has four walls for the one classroom). The students in this research project were in an open concept classroom. There was complete team planning (the grade one teachers planned the same lessons for students) and some team teaching occurred (teaching two classes at the same time). Team teaching was difficult to achieve in the open classroom due to the difference in schedules. The classroom appearance was inspired by a Reggio Emilia approach to primary education (including aesthetic features) and a non-clutter and earth tone environment (Wurm, 2005). Students’ work added color to the classrooms. Students collaborated, learned and worked together at tables. They did not have their own individual desks and all of their work was stored in bins that were in the classroom. The classroom had a SmartBoard that was attached to the wall. Most classrooms in public school district have SmartBoards, which inspired the creation of year-long lesson plans about self-talk on Smart Notebook.

At the end of first grade, having been part of lessons and activities related to self-talk since the beginning of the school year, students were interviewed during morning activities, lunchtime or when they were attending music class. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the classroom and some interviews were conducted in a small breakout room that was located directly across the hall from the classroom. The

breakout room was only used for students who were interviewed during music class.

Each interview (both the first and second part of the interviews) lasted in total between 20 to 30 minutes.

### **The Student Participants**

In this study, the grade-one student participants that were interviewed had parental consent forms signed and returned. The interview aspect to the study allowed for 19 out of a possible 21 students to participate. There were nine boys and 10 girls. There were two students who were unable to participate in the research. One of the students did not return a signed consent form and therefore was withdrawn from the interviews. The second student had special needs and, being sensitive towards this child's needs and abilities, was not asked to participate in the interview. There were four students who participated in the interview who left for extended holidays, ranging from one to two and a half months, to visit their native countries during the school year. The students came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and had various learning needs academically, socially, emotionally and behaviorally. There were five students whose first language was English and 12 students who were English Language Learners (ELL); English was their second language. The students' background information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Background of Student Participants*

Student Number	Gender	English Language Learner
Student 1	Male	Yes
Student 2	Male	Yes
Student 3	Male	Yes
Student 4	Female	Yes
Student 5	Female	No
Student 6	Male	Yes
Student 7	Female	No
Student 8	Male	Yes- Extended holidays
Student 9	Female	Yes- Extended holidays
Student 10	Male	Yes- Extended holidays
Student 11	Male	Yes
Student 12	Female	Yes- Extended holidays
Student 13	Male	Yes
Student 14	Male	No
Student 15	Female	Yes
Student 16	Female	Yes
Student 17	Female	No
Student 18	Female	No
Student 19	Female	Yes

**Self-talk Background**

The students experienced a year-long, September 2010 to June 2011, focus on self-talk, which was taught using explicit Smart Notebook lessons that were prepared, created and presented. There were four sets of lessons shared with the students which is summarized in Table 2. Furthermore, self-talk strategies and skills were attained through large and small group discussions that stemmed from the lessons that were presented. The students implemented these skills in their daily activities and interactions across all curricular areas with teacher guidance. All of these lessons and experiences preceded the formal interviews, which were conducted at the end of the school year. These lessons

were also created to link to the curriculum areas of health, language arts, and social studies.

Table 2

*Self-talk Lessons Overview*

Lesson Set	Description	Outcome
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define of self-talk</li> <li>• Learn don't is a word to stop using</li> <li>• Rethink with: "What do I want?"</li> <li>• e.g., Don't budge→I want you to go to the back of the line.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand what self-talk is</li> <li>• Recognize the word don't as a word to stop using</li> <li>• Learn how to communicate what you want verses what you don't want.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on statement" I don't know" and rethink it to "I know I can do it and I just need some help."</li> <li>• Provide 5 strategies to help students find information needed (e.g., look at the board, ask a friend etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give students and immediate replacement affirmation for a commonly used negative statement.</li> <li>• Teach students new affirmations to replace old ones.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the terminology hurtful and helpful</li> <li>• Give statements and identify feelings evoked from the statements said</li> <li>• Identify if statements are helpful or hurtful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize words can be hurtful or helpful and that feelings are linked to our thoughts</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce students to traffic light and visual chart</li> <li>• Practice rethinking various statements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide visual representations to remember the three-step process to changing thoughts from hurtful to helpful</li> </ul>

### **Specific Terminology used with Students**

During the formal lessons, students learned simple, *kid friendly* terminology to help them easily remember, retrieve and understand self-talk concepts. Students learned that there are *hurtful* words or *red* words (negative words) and *helpful* words or *green* words (positive words). They also learned the terminology *rethink*, which represented the meta-cognitive process of changing their thinking from red words (negative) to green words (positive). The colors were chosen to parallel the traffic lights (this strategy will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4) and what each color represents: (a) stop: red (stop thinking or speaking hurtful words (mean words) or words that create feelings of anger, sadness, irritation etc.); (b) rethink (slow down): yellow (recognize the hurtful thoughts and change thinking to be helpful); and (c) go: green (think or speak helpful words (kind words) or words that create feelings of joy, excitement and inspiration etc.).

This visual cue of a traffic light, as shown in Chapter 4 Figure 3, was created to assist the entire meta-cognitive process (students thinking about their thinking) that occurs when changing negative statements to positive statements.

### **Exploration of Data: A Collection of Interviews**

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state, “the interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects’ own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how the subject interprets some piece of the word” (p. 103). They go on to state, “rich data [is] filled with words that reveal the respondents’ perspectives” (p. 104). For these reasons, interview questions were chosen as the method to collect data. These intentional questions were assigned to evoke student voice and gain a deeper understanding of their insights on self-

talk. The interview questions derived from the information in the research articles, books and the outcomes of the Self-talk lessons.

All of the students were asked the same questions and respond to the same statements in order to support patterns and themes and to ground the research. In addition, Marshall and Rossman (2011) indicated the importance of taking age into consideration and keeping that in mind while gathering data that is sensitive to their needs (p. 148). The student participants ranged in age from five to seven years, and the questions were consistent and considerate of their maturity.

Just as the students learned kid friendly terminology that would help them remember self-talk concepts, the interview questions and statements were given in kid friendly language. Therefore, the students understood and connected with what was being asked and linked these to what they had already learned. The questions asked of the participants may have been slightly modified or simplified to ensure accurate interpretation and clear responses from the interviewee.

All of the interviews were recorded through an audio application called GarageBand, from a password-protected laptop that was later transcribed into a written Word document. When transcribing the audio voices, commonly used words in spoken language were omitted (e.g., um, uh, like) and repetitive words (e.g., if somebody says, if somebody says, if somebody says hurtful words etc. I only recorded once “if somebody says . . .”). These were not used because they added no value to the response of students understanding and expression of self-talk. On the other hand, when the students paused when speaking for five seconds or more that was documented (e.g., pause 5 s). This was

to draw attention to the fact that students sometimes needed time to formulate and express (meta-cognitive abilities) their ideas (especially for ELL students).

The 19 interviews that were conducted by the researcher during June of 2011 were comprised of two parts. The first part was made up of 11 interview questions. These questions were given to the students' parents prior to the interviews. Students answered these questions solely from their memory (no visual prompting or cuing) and the interviews were conducted more as a casual conversation. Table 3 shares the questions of all 11 interviews of the students as well indicate which Smart Notebook lessons supported the asking of these questions.

Table 3

*Interview Questions and Sequential Summary of Lessons*

Question	Lesson	Research Question
1	Lesson 1	What is self-talk?
2	Lesson 1, 2, 3	What are hurtful words or red words?
3	Lesson 1, 2, 3	What are hurtful words or red words?
4	Lesson 1, 2, 3	What words are helpful words or green words?
5	Lesson 1, 2, 3	How do helpful words or green words make you feel?
6	Lesson 1, 2, 3, 4	How can you rethink hurtful words to make them helpful words?
7	Lesson 1, 2, 3	How does that make you feel if you are able to rethink a hurtful to a helpful word?
8	Lesson 1, 2, 3, 4	How would you rethink, "don't eat that?" "I never get to go in the front of the line." "I can't do it." "I am not very good at math."
9	Students Voice/ Perspective	Do you catch yourself changing hurtful words to helpful words? How do you do it?
10	Students Voice/ Perspective	Do you think it is valuable or helpful to learn self-talk? Why?
11	Students Voice/ Perspective	How has self-talk helped you?

For the second set of interview questions, students were provided with a visual support, which was a chart that was introduced to them in the final set of Self-talk lessons in June of 2011 (this is shown in Chapter 4, Table 9). This chart was created as an overview of all the specific hurtful and helpful words that they learned. This chart was color coded to parallel with the traffic light colors. The hurtful words were red and the helpful words were green. In addition, it was a visual reinforcement for students to use to independently identify and rethink hurtful or negative statements as well as to recognize when they said helpful or green words on their own.

There were nine affirmations in the second interview that were given to each student which are shown in Table 4. These statements were given to the students the day of their interview and they did not review or prepare for the interview. This was to discover if they were independently capable of identifying and rethinking negative words or statements to positive words or statements. The first five statements encompassed the three-step process where the children learned to change hurtful words to helpful words: Stop, Rethink, Go. The students were asked to identify three components in each statement: What the red word was, rethink the statement and then identify the green word in the new statement they created.

Table 4

*Second Set of Interview Questions: Part A*

Statement	Red word is	Rethink	Green word is
I can't draw very well.			
I'll try to clean up my table.			
I don't know how to read.			
I never get to sharpen the pencils.			
I am not good at writing.			

In the last four statements, which are shown in Table 5, the students needed to only identify the positive or helpful words. The aim of this was to see if students could recognize what words made statements positive. It is important for students to recognize kind words when shared and that the three step process is only needed when negative words are spoken.

Table 5

*Second Set of Interview Questions: Part B*

Statement	What are the green words?
I can do it and I just need some help.	
I would like to help clean the table.	
I am strong.	
The more I practice, the better I get.	

After completing my interviews, I felt that Part A of the second set of interview statements highlighted students understanding of green words. Therefore, the data collected from these statements were not accounted for in my final data analysis.

**Ethical Considerations**

All of the students who participated returned a signed parental consent form. In the letter that was sent home, parents were encouraged to contact my supervisor or myself if they had any questions or concern about the interviews. There were two parents that I spoke to over the phone to clarify the purpose of the interviews for the study. There was no negative feedback shared by any of the parents, and they were very open to support the research data through their children's participation. The first set of interview questions were given to the parents and their child prior to the interview. In addition, all of the students' identities were protected. Students were given a number (e.g., Student 1, Student 2, etc. as shown in Table 1) and that is how they are identified in this study.

Permission was given by parents to disclose their child's gender and if he or she was an English Language Learner. All of the data collected was stored in a secure place and location.

I took every opportunity to be considerate of the students' ages and their oral language ability which is usually their strongest means to communicate their understandings. Students are learning to write and draw accurate pictures in grade one. It seemed most appropriate to allow them to speak about their understandings in a setting that was familiar and comfortable to them.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) noted that "Interviews are often intimate encounters that depend on trust; building trust—albeit time bound—is important" (p. 145). The positive and trusting relationship built between the students, parents and the teacher who was the researcher was developed throughout the year. This trust created a more accurate result and encouraged the students to demonstrate their ability to openly share their ideas. It also helped parents to not be worried about the study and allowed them to give their permission for their children to participate in the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

Star (2007) noted that "Grounded theory is an excellent tool for understanding invisible things. It can be used to reveal the invisible work involved in many kinds of tasks (Bowker and Star, 1999; Star, 1991a, b, 1998; Star and Ruhleder, 1996; Star and Strauss, 1999)" (p. 79). This was the aim of my research, that through the data collected by interviews, the invisible thoughts that are usually spoken and unquestioned, would be revealed to the visible consciousness. The student participants' specific vocabulary and

ideas, grounded from the data collected through interviews, were glimpses into their psyche and the way they view themselves in relation to their world.

The data analysis emerged fluidly. In the initial phases of the data analyses I was uncertain as to how to organize the data so that themes and categories would emerge. As the process continued and the data was reviewed, almost naturally, ideas fell into place. The process emerged as Bogdan and Bilken (2007) indicate, just like the categories.

Next, the participant interviews were transcribed, their responses were then organized and sorted so that each interview question asked had all the students' responses recorded. Please refer to Figure 1 and Appendix A to reveal how each student's voice was documented for each interview question. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that, "You are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect data and examine the parts" (p. 6). By sorting their responses, their individual ideas allowed a collective voice and understanding to emerge.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) discussed various ways to code data (p. 211). I decided to use different colors and some symbols to organize and code the data as shown in Figure 1. The categories, patterns and ideas emerged by looking at the specific words (hurtful and helpful), and phrases (hurtful and helpful) that the students used to communicate the impact and strategies they used with self-talk. These words and affirmations for each question were color-coded and quantified to reveal differences and similarities between student responses.

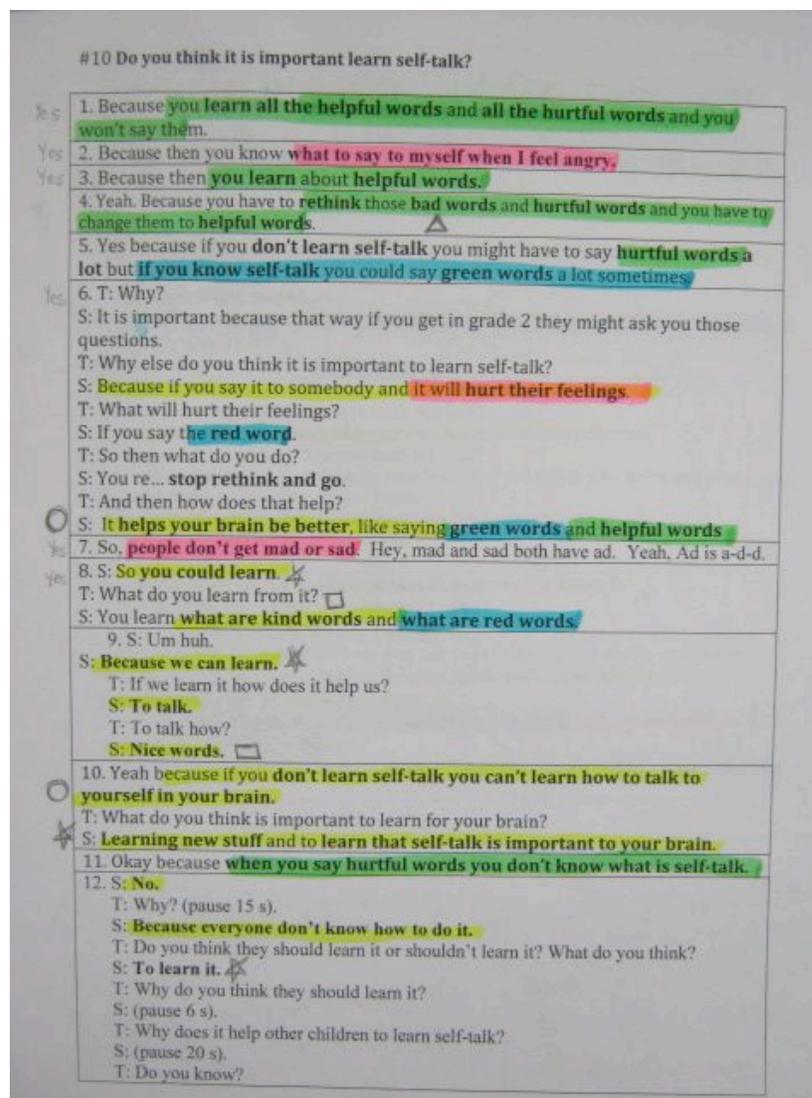


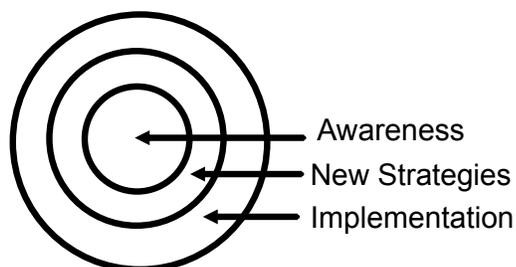
Figure 1. Data analysis: The sorting and color coding process.

This process exemplified student usage and understanding of specific hurtful and helpful words, which was the core and focus of this study. This process supported Dey's statement that "Graphic representations provide another powerful means of grounded category analysis" (cited in Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 179). The visual information helped to support and ground the research.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) shared the importance of researchers reading their data repeatedly in order to become intimate and familiar with the material (p. 210). Dey's

quotes from Glaser and Strauss who stressed the importance of categories emerging from the data and by doing so preconceived notions are averted (cited in Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 173). After rereading and analyzing and then reanalyzing the students' responses to the questions that were asked in the interview, it was recognized that there were three distinct metacognitive processes that emerged from the data. For positive self-talk strategies to have an impact on students, there are three processes that are built upon each other: awareness, learning new strategies and skills, and implementing and practicing using the new skill to replace the old habit in daily activities and experiences. Awareness is part of learning new strategies and practicing the new strategies is part of implementation. They are intricately connected and each component is necessary to create a change in one's self-talk.

Awareness → New Strategies → Implementation



*Figure 2.* Three step meta-cognitive process.

These three categories that emerged from the data will be closely examined and presented and discussed in the following chapters.

#### **Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion**

In this study, there were three distinct yet very interconnected processes related to self-talk that emerged from the data: awareness, new strategies and implementation.

These three processes appeared necessary for change to occur and for the old habits of

negative self-talk to be replaced with the new habits of positive self-talk in a group of grade one children. In order to understand this whole process as it emerged, each process will be discussed in terms of how they came to my attention as a researcher and how I attended to them in teaching this group of grade one children. This study also highlighted the students' voices and their perspectives and reflections on self-talk and its value to them in their lives and interactions and those findings will also be discussed in this chapter.

### **Part 1: Awareness**

Awareness is a conscious effort to acknowledge and understand information. Coholic (2011) cites Jon Kabat-Zinn who says, "mindfulness practice is an activity that encourages awareness to emerge through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment" (p. 303). Being aware and mindful brings forth ideas, words and knowledge to one's attention. When we become aware of a concept, we are purposely attending to the information, which bring ideas from the subconscious to the conscious mind. Developing awareness is a continual process and deepens as we continue to learn, practice and apply new strategies. Awareness is the first step for long-term change and growth to occur. This section focuses on the specific words that were chosen for this study and the data that emerged from the student interviews in relation to helping children develop their awareness of self-talk. All of this information is necessary to understand *why* self-talk is an essential concept of learning.

For change to occur in individuals' lives, they need to be aware that there is something that needs to be altered. Essentially, individuals need to be aware of *what* they are doing so they can fully understand *how* it impacts them. For the purposes of this

study, the student participants needed to understand *what* self-talk is and recognize how their inner and outer voice impacts the way they feel and act in various situations: academically, behaviorally, socially and emotionally. As Helmstetter (1982) indicated that “it makes no difference how harmless the words seems at the time, they are the backbone of everything which works against us and stands in our way” (p. 73). To increase the frequency of positive self-talk, the children in this study had to become aware of their inner voices and learn how to attend and nurture the positive voices.

### **Definition of Self-Talk**

Students developed an awareness of self-talk by learning the definition of it and understanding that words can be either hurtful or helpful through the large group self-talk lessons. The first five questions that the students were asked in their interviews were used to assess their level of awareness about self-talk by their ability to identify specific words or affirmations and feelings.

1. What is self-talk?
2. What are hurtful words or red words (negative words)?
3. How do hurtful words make you feel?
4. What are helpful words or green words?
5. How do helpful words make you feel?

The grade one participants’ demonstrated awareness of the *specific* words they were using that either worked for or against them. As will be seen, the majority of the students accurately identified specific negative (don’t, can’t, never) and positive (am, practice, can) words or affirmations during their one-on-one interviews.

Self-talk was frequently reinforced in the classroom and with individual students throughout the year. During the last month of school, when the students were asked to define self-talk they responded using similar terminology. Table 6 reveals how the students defined and made sense of self-talk. Some of the students shared more than one idea about the meaning of self-talk. Therefore, their responses were accounted for in all applicable sections in Table 7. Table 6 reveals a sample of the students' responses. Please see Appendix A for all of the students' responses.

Table 6

*Self-talk Definitions*

Definition	Total Student Responses	Student Examples
Hurtful/Helpful	4	S14: It's like you talk in your head and you can say helpful words or hurtful words. It's best if you say helpful words.
Mind, Brain, Head	12	S6: It's about when you talk about and what you say in your brain.
Feelings	2	S18: "Self-talk is when, if you feel tight inside that's self-talk and when you calm down you think of good stuff in your brain that is self-talk."
Rethink Words	2	S3: "Self-talk, you talk and sometimes when you say hurtful word you rethink it and say it to a green word."
Unsure	2	S9: Pause 5 s ( <i>looked a bit confused</i> ). T: What did we learn about self-talk in class? S9: I don't remember. (data omitted)

The students communicated the definition of self-talk by using various terminologies and concepts that they had learned through the self-talk lessons. The definition of self-talk that was taught to the students at the beginning of the school year was, “Self-talk are the words we say out loud and in our heads about ourselves and other people.” The majority, which was 12, of the students understood self-talk as being the words that are spoken in their mind, brain or head. The other eight children shared that self-talk can be hurtful or helpful words, discussed the feelings that were associated with self-talk and indicated how they rethought red words to green words. The two students (Students 8 and 9) who were unable to clearly define self-talk had both left for an extended family holiday at some point during the school year.

### **Hurtful and Helpful Words**

For students to implement new strategies, they had to recognize what to change and then how to change it. Students were asked to communicate what were the hurtful and the helpful words that they knew as well as the feelings associated with them. These concepts needed to be understood separately so that students knew how to change hurtful words to helpful words. From the data there were five categories that emerged from students’ awareness about hurtful and helpful words:

1. Self-talk words: These students were able to identify some of the specific helpful and hurtful words that were taught in the self-talk lessons: am, can, do, want, didn’t, not, never, and can’t.
2. Basic words: There were many helpful and hurtful words reinforced in the large group lessons. These basic helpful words are ones that are commonly

known and used in conversations: please, thank you, you're welcome, hate, dumb, good, nice, and friend.

3. Self-talk Affirmations: These are hurtful and helpful statements that have the self-talk words in them.
4. Friend-talk Affirmations: These are statements that children say to each other and usually start with, "You are." For example, "You are kind" and "You are not my friend."
5. Confusion: These responses from students mixed up helpful for hurtful words or hurtful words for helpful words. They needed some prompting to redirect them and remember which term meant what.

The students' responses gave insight into their level of awareness and how they internalized and used self-talk. Table 7 reveals the data compiled from Questions 2 and 4 during the interviews (What are hurtful words or red words? and What are helpful words or green words?), which explains the students' awareness of the words that impacted their beliefs and thinking. This illustrates the conscious understanding of self-talk within the student participants. There were some of the students' replies that belonged to more than one category. This was accounted for in the number under each category and is colored coded in the student examples below. Table 7 reveals a representation of the different types of the students' responses. Please see Appendix B and D for all of the student participants' complete responses.

Table 7

*Students Responses for Helpful and Hurtful Words: Questions 2 and 4*

Self-talk Words	Basic Words	Self-talk Affirmations	Friend-talk	Confusion
<b>Helpful or Green Words</b>				
S16: Green words are that, can you, can, please and (pause 9 s), can, please and (pause 13 s) some words I don't know I just know the two.	S9: (pause 5 s) T: What are green words? S9: (pause 5 s) Thank you T: What else? S9: You're welcome. (Data omitted)	S5: "I can do this." "I will get a turn." (Data omitted) S5: Helpful words are great because it is fun to say them and they make you grow stronger like those plants.	S6: "You are the best." "You are good and you are good at soccer" and "you are good at writing." T: So do you know what words we have learned in class that are green words? S6: Yeah, please, would, I would like, please, and you're the best. (Data omitted)	S13: (pause 8 s) Green words are please, hi, bye, friend and helpful are don't, not and (pause 8 s) and do not.
10	8	7	4	3
<b>Hurtful or Red Words</b>				
S12: (Data omitted) "don't and not, try" S16: "Hurtful words are don't, never and try and never."	S18: Red words are don't, never, I hate you (pause 8 s). That's the worst. That's bad.	S5: Oh it is like, never, "I will never get a turn. And it is like, it could also be "My turn won't come and I can't do it" and (pause 6 s) your brain can say, "I don't like this friend and my turn won't come." (Data omitted)	S6: Red words are "I don't like you" or if you are and "you are bad." And helpful words are "I like you" and "you are the best writer." (Data omitted)	S9: (pause 9 s). I like you. T: Was that red words or green words? S: Green. T: So what are red words? What are hurtful words that we learned? S: (pause 11 s) "I don't like you." (Data omitted)
13	5	8	4	4
<b>Total Responses from Helpful and Hurtful Words</b>				
23	13	15	8	7

The students were able to communicate an awareness of the hurtful and helpful words. With some prompting, the seven students who were confused between the terminology, helpful and hurtful, were able to communicate some accurate understanding of red and green words. There were 66 student responses in total from Questions 1 and 2. From the 66 student responses, there were 23 student responses that accurately identified the self-talk words for helpful (e.g., can, would like) and hurtful words (e.g., don't, never). There were 15 students in total who used those self-talk words appropriately in the affirmations that they shared. Therefore, 57.6% of the student responses accurately identified self-talk words either individually or in a statement. Overall, 89.4% (59 of the 66 student responses) of the students were able to accurately communicate specific helpful and hurtful words or specific affirmations (as shown in the examples above). Therefore, the majority of the students' participants were aware of the positive and negative implications of specific words which were taught in the large group lessons. The students' responses, as shown in the above table, overlapped in the sections and these were accounted for in the numerical data.

### **Hurtful and Helpful Feelings**

Our thoughts and emotions are interconnected. Neck and Manz (1992) noted that “irrational or maladaptive thoughts produce emotional distress, whereas rational thoughts result in positive emotions . . . these emotions are the result of our self-talk” (p. 688). This was also confirmed when Hannell (2004) stated that “The way we think has a very strong impact on the way we feel” (p. 32). Therefore, an indicator of whether words are positive or negative would be based also on how we feel. If we feel good and joyous inside, that means our thoughts are working for us. If we feel frustrated or sad that means

our thoughts are working against us. Furthermore, these emotions, that stem from our thoughts, impact our ability to problem solve, make decisions, judge and evaluate (Neck & Manz, 1992, p. 688).

From the data, all of the 19 students shared that hurtful words were associated with feelings of sadness. Moreover, there were 15 students who shared that they felt upset, mad, angry or frustrated when they hear or use hurtful words. The study further showed the connection between helpful words and emotions because 19 students communicated feelings of happiness associated with them. There were four students who said they felt excited and one student who shared that energetic emotions were created.

Students recognized and identified the feelings that are connected with the spoken word. This data further supports the impact words have on children through their emotions. The students learned *what* specific words impacted their emotions either negatively (e.g., feelings of hurt, anguish, uncertainty, insecurity, anger, or sadness) or positively (e.g., courage, excitement, eagerness, encouragement, perseverance, reliance, or joy). Please refer to Appendix C and E for student responses about the way hurtful and helpful words made them feel.

### **Literature Connections of Helpful and Hurtful Words**

The purpose of this Awareness section was for students to identify and understand the impact (based on their feelings) specific positive and negative words had on them. The words that were targeted in this study derived mostly from the literature I read, my personal experience with anxiety and working with young students. From this, I recognized and targeted specific words to remove and specific words to replace them.

These are common words that are used everyday and impact the way we function and perform on a daily basis.

There are many people who use general phrases, such as, “Be good,” “Say kind words,” “That wasn’t very nice,” “Just relax,” “What were you thinking?” and “Why did you do that?” These general statements can be problematic because there is nothing in them that specifies how to accomplish change or what exactly the positive alternate option may be. Essentially, we need to ask, “What are specific kind words that you can say? What does positive look like and sound like?”

There are specific words that evoke more positive emotions and other words that evoke more negative emotions. Horn (2002) states that “words can be stumbling blocks or they can be stepping-stones. You can stroke [yourself] with words or you can strike [yourself] with words” (p. 29). The negative words that were targeted above and brought to the participants’ awareness were, *can’t* (*can not*), *don’t* (*do not*), *never*, *not*, and *try*. It was important to teach students the contractions of the hurtful words so they could identify it in oral and written forms. The next two sections focus on what hurtful and helpful words were chosen for this study, why, and how they were introduced to the children in my classroom.

### **Awareness of Hurtful Words**

- **Not:** “*I can’t do it. I don’t know.*” The word *not* is a common word that was used by children in my classroom when communicating to others and to themselves. Horn (2002) noted that, “many of us use the words “not,” “don’t,” “stop,” and “won’t,” when giving instructions or orders” (p. 52). The word *not* was frequently used by the students in this study and was often coupled with other words: cannot (can’t), do not

(don't), and will not (won't). The students in this study learned that *not* was a hurtful word because it comes from a feeling of deficiency. When the children felt stuck on concepts or activities, there were common phrases they said: "I can't do it," "I don't know," "I am not good at this," or "I don't know how to do it." These words and statements usually made the children feel disheartened and created a dependency on others (copying or being passive) to do something for them or inhibited their progress. They felt a sense of deficiency within themselves or feelings of not being good enough.

The students in this study often used the word *can't* when they encountered a novel task or a task that was challenging for them. The literature discussed the negative impact the word *can't* can have on people. Horn (2002) explained that "the words *can't because* are like verbal doors slamming in your face" (p. 27). Nelsen (2006) explained that when you hear children say, "I can't" this usually means children are asking you to "Do it for me." Helmstetter (1982) shared the impact of the words "*I can't*" have by stating that it "is our way of telling ourselves to hesitate, questions our capabilities, and accept less than we know we could have done, had we only given ourselves a chance" (p. 73). It is a verbal block to reach our potential or to set goals that will create more positive achievement and better results.

The students used the word *don't* time and again. This was the first red word that the students learned in the self-talk lessons because it is used so often. Furthermore, the children needed to frequently practice rethinking the word don't so they could accurately state what they wanted. There are many children, including the children in this study, who use it and can recognize and explain what they "don't"

want or what they are not supposed to do: “Don’t run,” “Don’t fight,” “I don’t like you,” and “I don’t want to be your friend.” Many of the students when asked, “How can you make that better?” would state what not to do versus what to do. Horn (2002) stated that “as long as we keep coupling them in our communication with what we don’t want, we’ll keep getting what we don’t want” (p. 54). The more we focus on what we don’t want, the more we reinforce and attend to what we want to get rid of rather than what we want to replace it with. In the lessons provided for students, “can’t,” “don’t,” and “not” were used as separate negative statements because they are used so often and it is important to recognize each word independently in statements.

- **Never:** “*I never get a turn.*” When students don’t get what they want, they tend to over exaggerate or over generalize the truth by using the word *never* in statements like “I never get \_\_\_”. The students in this study used this word often when they wanted to do something immediately and instead had to wait their turn or for another opportunity to arise. Horn (2002) considered the word *never* as an extreme word (other examples of extreme words are always, no one, every time) and as Horn explains extreme words “produce extreme reactions” (p. 44). On the other hand, Helmstetter (1982) believed the word *never* shows the awareness that there is a need for change to occur. He sees this word as used “only on those occasions when you are working at effecting a specific change” (p. 77). Helmstetter noted this as a lower form of positive self-talk. For the purpose of this study, the word *never* is considered as a hurtful or negative word because it reinforces what is undesired as opposed to the desired thought, behavior and action. This is also confirmed when Horn (2002)

explains that the brain overlooks these words (never, don't, can't, stop) and focuses on the "word in the sentence that is more prominent and visual" (p. 52). The last few words at the end of a sentence are what stick in the mind. For example, a common phrase we use is "Never give up." The last part of that statement is "give up." Furthermore, the statement, "Never do that again," the end part is "do it again." The end words need to be supportive and proactive to state the desired outcome.

- **Try:** *"I'll try to do better."* The final word that the students were introduced to near the end of the school year and was not as heavily emphasized was the word *try*. When someone is trying to do something, there are feelings of uncertainty. The mind automatically thinks and adds, "but maybe I won't or can't." For example, if someone says, "I'll try to do better next time," the mind finishes that sentence with "but maybe I won't." This word accepts that failure is a possibility and is near at hand.

### **Awareness of Helpful Words**

Helmstetter (1982) shared that the word *no* we hear when we are younger is used far too often and outweighs the number of times we hear the word *yes*. This means an intentional effort needs to be placed on saying the word *yes* more often or using helpful words. The students in this study learned hurtful words because this brings awareness and understanding to what helpful words are. The students benefitted from knowing what they *don't* want because it will help them to understand what they do *want*. The words that evoke positive emotions when used to promote constructive communication are can, do, practice, help, would like and am. These words find solutions and seek out information, which creates more independence and skills. These helpful words are active and make children feel capable and valued. In this study, the students recognized that the

words *can, will, am, would like, practice, helpful, better, next time, sometimes* were positive and they were associated with uplifting emotions.

- **Can and do:** *“I can do it.”* – The student participants benefitted from learning how to mindfully state what they needed or wanted. The students in this study could easily tell what they didn’t want and when they had to share what they wanted, they struggled to find the words to express that preferred behavior. Horn (2002) emphasized the worth of focusing on what “can” be done or what “can I do”. Hence, the students in this study learned and heard the desired thought, behavior or action and could work to act in a positive manner, which resulted in positive responses and interactions. Their focus and attention was driven by positive words. Students learned what skills they needed to acquire, practice and strengthen. These words are what build students self-confidence (Hannell, 2004).
- **Practice/Help/Better:** *“The more I practice, the better I get. I just need some help”* – I chose to use these words in the helpful category and placed emphasis on them in the self-talk lessons. Due to the frequency usage of the words *can’t* and *don’t*, the student participants had to vocalize what they needed to improve on and then they learned the necessary skills that would help them to achieve success. These words created a desire for growth and change and made the student participants responsible for their own learning. Instead of them feeling inadequate and sharing, “I don’t know,” they sought a proactive stance by stating, “I need some help.” In addition, these are words that honor growth, the development and maturation of skills.
- **Would like and like:** *“I would like a turn to sharpen the pencils.”* – Bassett (1996) stated the words “I’d like to” (p. 185) refrains from deficiencies and focuses on what

one wants to do. This is confirmed by Horn (2002) as she recognizes those words place a concentrated effort on desired outcomes. Many of the students used the word “like” when they spoke about themselves and others. Therefore, it was a natural word that they could learn and purposely used to create positive affirmations. In addition, the students learned to use *would like* instead of using extreme words like *never*.

- **I am or I will:** “*I am smart. I will clean up the table.*” – Helmstetter (1982) shared that the words “I am” are the most effective self-talk we can use because “you are painting a completed picture of yourself, the way you really wanted to be, handing it to your subconscious . . . ” (p. 78). These words can strengthen one’s self-belief and boost one’s confidence. The students learned the magnitude and impact these words can have when used consistently. This term was introduced later in the school year. Some of the statements that the students were encouraged to use were, “I am smart. I am learning and growing. I am friendly. I am kind. I am responsible.” It is important to note that the words after *I am* must be positive words. These are powerful words that can work for us or against us, therefore they must be used mindfully and optimistically.

The students in this study used the word *will* when rethinking some of the affirmations. They learned to use the word *will* as a replacement for hurtful words. The words *I am* are more ideal to use because they state the action in present tense versus the future tense. Being mindful of the participants’ age and development of the English language, both were commonly used by the students.

- **Next time or Sometimes:** “*Sometimes I get a turn. Next time I will get a turn.*” – These words are realistic words and are helpful to replace extreme words like *never*.

This was reinforced with the students during peer interactions when they spoke to me about how they were feeling. Horn (2002) states that when extreme words are used to ask, “Is that true?” (p. 46). The students were encouraged to replace extreme words with, *sometimes* or *next time* which evokes a sense of opportunity and understanding. Students needed to learn to put things into perspective and these words achieve that aim.

### **Part 2: New Strategies**

The student participants had an awareness of what negative and positive words were and the feelings associated with them. From this awareness stage the students were ready for the next step, which was to learn how to change those negative words to positive words. New strategies were needed. The three new strategies, which are mentioned in this section and that were taught to the student participants were: large group affirmations (direct and concise statements), Stop, Rethink, Go (changing red words to green words), and asking “Is it hurtful or helpful?” (reflecting on their word choice). I anticipated that this would change their old habits and would create new and more positive habits.

Bassett (1995) states, that if you keep doing what you always have done, you will remain the same person be who you always have been. New habits form when new strategies are learned and applied. Helmstetter (1982) stated that habitual thinking changes with “a new, word-for-word set of directions or new programming to the subconscious mind” (p. 35). He adds that the importance of learning a new “programming vocabulary” that is specific and can be used at any time is paramount to the process. Bassett (1995) affirmed that reprogramming negative messages to positive

messages make us feel good inside (p. 147). Stanulis and Manning (2002) shared that positive self-talk helps an individual cope, correct, reinforce or guide a person to a goal (p. 6). A person has to steer his or her attention in a new direction in order to receive different results. Change can be difficult, if unclear as to *how* to accomplish it. This stage is crucial because even if people are aware of a challenge or something within them that they would like to change, if they don't have new strategies, they will revert to their old ways and habits. The children in this study were given three new strategies to replace the hurtful thinking with helpful thinking.

### **Strategy One: Large Group Affirmations**

Simister (2007) shared that “Everyone—regardless of ability—can learn to improve their potential by developing positive thinking [self-talk]” (p. 23). One of the strategies that the children acquired was learning and practicing specific large group positive affirmations. These were direct word-for-word affirmations that were taught during large group lessons as shown below in Figure 3. Each year that I have taught, I have heard my students time and again use similar hurtful statements during various activities. I took note of these hurtful affirmations and created helpful affirmations for the students in this study. These statements were taught early on in the school year to support the student participants to use helpful affirmations when communicating their thoughts or needs.

The aim of the large group affirmations was to keep them simple and concise so that they were easy for the participants to recall. Furthermore, it was essential that these affirmations could be used often and were applicable in various situations and curricular subjects. These helpful affirmations were specifically created to replace commonly used

negative affirmations. Helmstetter (1982) shared that “Good Self-Talk is simple Self-Talk. It should be easy to recall and use any time you need it” (p. 240). Students need to be taught effective skills and abilities (Coholic, 2011).

Through direct teacher modeling, students were provided with common simple negative statements and then were given a new immediate affirmation to replace it (see below Figure 3). This provided the children with modeling and immediate success to implement positive self-talk. To create helpful self-talk, “teachers need to help children bring their own meta-cognitive unhelpful and helpful self-talk to a level of awareness through explicit modeling and practicing” (Stranulis & Manning, 2002, p. 6).

Students were encouraged and reinforced to use the new helpful affirmations in their daily experiences. In addition, the students had a common goal, which was to replace certain negative statements and they also supported each other in this endeavor. Stanulis and Manning (2002) shared that in order for students to monitor and regulate their self-talk, they need to be in a positive environment (p. 4). The immediate and new affirmations created an environment that was kind and supportive. This strategy was significant because it gave students a simple, clear and instantaneous replacement for negative self-talk. Furthermore, students reminded, encouraged and supported each other to use these statements daily.

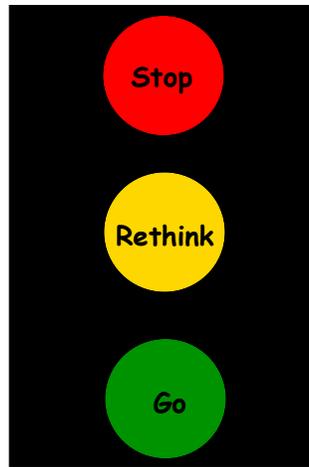
• I don't know or I can't do it.	→ I know I can do it and I just need some help.
• I can't do this. This is too hard.	→ The more I practice, the better I get.
• I never get a turn.	→ I am patient. I can wait. My turn will come.
• Don't touch me.	→ Please keep your hands to yourself (ending states the want).
• Don't budge.	→ Every spot is special. Please go to the back of the line (ending states the want).
• If the brain wants to cheat or lie.	→ I am honest. I tell the truth.
• This is too hard.	→ I take little, little steps.

*Figure 3.* Negative affirmation changed to positive affirmations.

These negative statements are valuable to recognize because they are used often. Then when the alternate affirmation is learned students would be speaking more helpful words.

### **Strategy Two: Stop, Rethink, Go**

The second strategy that the students learned was the three-step process of Stop, Rethink, Go. This multi-step process was purposely represented in a traffic light, which is shown below in Figure 4, because most of the children in this study knew and understood what traffic lights were and how they worked. This was displayed in the classroom to remind students to remember and use this strategy. The students learned that they had to stop saying red or hurtful (negative) words. Then they had to rethink (which was represented by the color yellow which meant to slow down and make a change) those hurtful words and change them into go words, which were green and helpful (positive).



*Figure 4.* Visual representation for self-talk: traffic lights.

The student participants learned that this process (which was an example of meta-cognition) changed hurtful or red words into helpful or green words. Helmstetter (1982) indicated that thought replacement occurs when a person erases “the old negative, counter-productive, work-against-you programming and replaces it with a healthy, new, positive, productive kind of programming . . . Erase and replace” (p. 46). When the children said a red or hurtful word, they were asked to *rethink* it by either the teacher or one of their peers. Many students would nod their heads and agreed that they needed to change the statement. For them to take the next step, students were told to “Make it green.” This process also reinforced the students to use the large group affirmations mentioned above.

As the students’ understanding of self-talk deepened furthered, they became more confident, flexible, and creative in order to recognize and rethink their own negative sentences. From the data, the large group affirmations seemed to be foundational for them to create their own helpful affirmations. Furthermore, the students benefitted from learning which exact words were hurtful (don’t, not, can’t, am not) and helpful (can, am, practice, help, know).

As we approached the end of the school year, I placed these self-talk words in a chart located on a shelf in the classroom. The chart was colored coded to parallel a traffic light (Figure 4), which reminded the students what each color meant (red means stop hurtful words, yellow means slow down and rethink words from hurtful to helpful words and yellow means go with helpful words). This chart had the same words that the students were to be asked to stop saying in order to replace these with green or *go* words. Table 8 shows the visual chart that the students referred to in the classroom.

Table 8

*Visual Chart for Students*

Stop	Rethink	Go
I can't	→	I can . . .
I don't		I am practicing . . .
		I need help with . . .
		"The more I practice the better I get."
		"I know I can do it and I just need some help."
I never	→	I can . . .
		I would like . . .
		"I am patient and I can wait."
I am not	→	I am (helpful word at the end)
		I can . . .
		"The more I practice the better I get."
I'll try	→	do
		Take "try" right out of the sentence.
but	→	and

**Strategy Three: Is it Hurtful or Helpful?**

The third strategy that the students were exposed to throughout the school year was learning to recognize if the words they were saying were *helpful* or *hurtful*. Students were asked by myself throughout the year, "Is that hurtful or helpful?" when they spoke to themselves, others and during large group lessons on self-talk. This question, alongside

“Was that a red or green word?” allowed the students to reflect on their word choice and how they treated themselves and others. I asked students this question during various curricular subjects, when they interacted with their peers and when they were working on activities in groups or independently. This was because they were constantly speaking out loud and sharing their thoughts throughout the day. The student participants answered this question independently, by asking their peers or by using the chart above to see if what they said was helpful or hurtful. This created a mindfulness in the students of being conscious of their thinking and rethinking when necessary.

We did a science experiment to observe the impact hurtful and helpful words have on living things. During the interview, student number 5 made a connection between helpful words and an activity we did as part of a science experiment for the unit entitled, “The Needs of Plants and Animals.” She shared that “Helpful words are great because it is fun to say them and they make you grow stronger like those plants.” We had two plants in our classroom that received the same amount of water, soil, air and sunlight. What differentiated the plants was that the students would say hurtful words to one plant (e.g., You will never grow. I don’t like you.) and helpful words to another plant (e.g., I love you and you are growing strong.). Interestingly, the hurtful plant sprouted first and started growing quickly. A week later the helpful seed sprouted and began to grow. The hurtful plant stopped growing after a certain height and then rapidly withered away. The helpful plant continued to grow and thrived. This was a fascinating experiment and helped me observe the students’ understanding of the impact words can have on living things.

This process (Is it hurtful or helpful?) reminds students to use helpful words and to rethink hurtful words to green words. When the students recognized what they said

was hurtful they had to rethink it by using the three-step process (Stop, Rethink, Go) mentioned above to make it helpful. This process also highlighted the impact of their words. The students purposely took control of their thoughts by creating positive self-talk words which created uplifting emotions.

### **Understanding Terminology**

The main self-talk process learned by the students was Stop, Rethink, Go. Students learned to place the most emphasis on the rethinking and go parts of the process. The word *stop* was considered a red word in this study and the students were encouraged to rethink this word (e.g., Stop budging me). This is because when we use the word stop we state what we don't want verses what we do want (Horn, 2002, p. 53). The word stop is used in the title of the three-step strategy mentioned above, Stop, Rethink, Go. I purposefully used this word in a strategy that I wanted the children to learn and use. There were three reasons I chose to use the word stop:

1. The color is associated with and represents the word stop in real life aspects (stop sign, and the traffic lights). It is easy for the mind to recall and remember that red means stop. Essentially, for change to occur we need to know what we want to *stop* so that we can create what we actually want to *go* for or start. I contemplated using the words *pause* or *breathe* but I recognized that it might be more challenging for children to remember or understand what those words meant. For change to occur students needed to bridge the gap between what they know and then to understand the unknown.
2. Self-talk is the ability to recognize what we *don't* want and replace it with what we *do want*. It is important to understand our dislikes and what makes us

feel angry and sad. The most important aspect of self-talk is to end a statement with what is wanted (the thought, behavior or action that we want to see). *Stop* maybe the first thing they hear and *Go* is the last, which reinforces that the end is what we want.

3. Students placed most of their attention on the word *rethink* and used that word when they heard a red word. Students initially would say, “You said a red word.” With modeling students learned to just say, “Rethink.” This placed emphasis on the action to change.

The terminology red and hurtful were used interchangeably also green and helpful were used interchangeably. This was to allow students to connect with whatever word was more prominent and made the most sense in their minds. To meet the needs of all children, both terms were used and the data reveals students used both effectively.

### **Strategies Used to Rethink**

For this study, the students needed to know and identify the new strategies that they learned in order to implement them. Therefore, the children understood *what* they needed to change and then *how* to change it. In the questionnaire, students were asked in Questions 6 and 7 to share how they changed hurtful words to helpful words.

(6) How can you rethink hurtful words to make them helpful words?

(7) How does that make you feel if you are able to rethink a hurtful to a helpful word?

Table 9 below (responses from Question 6) reveals which new strategies the student participants learned in order to change hurtful words to helpful words. Table 9 reveals a representation of the different types of the students’ responses. Please see Appendix F and G for all of the student participants’ responses from Questions 6 and 7.

Table 9

*New Strategies*

Strategy	Total Student Response	Student Examples
Stop, Rethink, Go	3	S7: Stop, rethink and then go.
Change red words to green words	3	S14: You can go to like the bookshelf and look at the change word board (Chart shown in Chapter 3, table 4). You can, if you said the red word you can switch it with the green word.
Change hurtful words to helpful words	1	S4: If the other person says a hurtful word, the other person will say, "What do you want?"
Examples of Rethought Affirmations	8	S8: S: You could change "do not" to "please can you do something else." T: Anything else? How can you change hurtful words to helpful words? S8: Like, "Don't touch that," you could say, "Please keep your hands to yourself."
Speaking nice words	3	S15: You just first stop and you think of a really good word that you can say.
Unsure of Understanding	1	S9: (pause 5 s) T: So if someone is being mean, how can we help them to be nice? S: Rethink. T: Rethink. What does rethink mean? Can you show me with your hands? S9: She rolled her arms (Rethink action learned in class)

From the data, the student participants used various ways to express how they rethink their negative thoughts. The most common way for students to express the new strategy learned, which was eight students (42.1%), was by giving specific negative

affirmations and then indicated which of the positive affirmations they would use instead. Many of their examples were statements introduced and reinforced in the classroom (e.g., strategy one, large group affirmations). While only three students (15.8%) specifically mentioned Stop, Rethink, Go, there were 11 students (57.9%) who mentioned that they *rethink* their thoughts to make them better or helpful. This confirms that the emphasis was placed on the word rethink and the students remembered that. In addition, the students were exposed to the traffic lights later in the year but learned the word rethink at the start of the year. The more exposure the students have, it appears the more they remember the process. All of the students expect for one, were able to explain how they rethought their negative affirmations by using words that they learned in the classroom.

Feelings are an indicator if thoughts or actions are working for us. When students changed their thoughts, as noted in the Awareness section, they expressed that it affected their emotions. If children can connect a positive thought to a positive feeling, they are more likely to repeat the action that made them feel good. This new awareness may lead them in a new direction as learners.

The children expressed positive emotions associated with the rethinking process. The following data are the students' responses to Question 7 from the interview. The majority of students, 14 of them, said it made them feel happy and used other comments that indicated they felt good or calm. Students used simple emotions to express their feelings but no one mentioned any negative feelings towards this process. As Student 7 mentioned, the rethinking process made her feel "happy because then no one will get mad or sad." Students felt confident and had a sense of "I can do it" when they rethought statements. This process appears to leave students with feelings of accomplishment and

joyfulness. Helmstetter (1982) explained that these positive words make someone feel “emotionally ‘up’” (p. 191). This was confirmed with the grade one-student responses. The students showed their awareness and knowledge of new strategies and in the next section they implement these skills.

### **Part 3: Implementation**

Awareness and understanding of new strategies leads to readiness for implementation. This stage puts knowledge into practice; therefore, real change becomes evident. For a grade one student, this means that he or she will be able to remove negative words from a statement and replace them with positive words without teacher support. Helmstetter (1982) affirmed that “it is one thing to learn *about* something; it is quite another thing to put something that is learned into practice” (p. 224). Action creates results. Stanulis and Manning (2002) noted that students need multiple opportunities “to practice talking to themselves and others in positive ways that reinforce successes, and coach students to guide themselves through frustrations” (p. 6). Students need to practice saying positive affirmations to themselves.

Additionally, students need to catch themselves and others saying hurtful words and rethink them to helpful words. The best time to change a thought is right after it is used. Therefore, a different reality of a situation can be immediately created. Change does not occur if only a few phrases alter. Helmstetter (1982) noted that “If you want to make some changes, change as *many* of the old phrases as you can find” (p. 235). When new knowledge and skills are acquired and understood, then to create permanent results, frequent and consistent action needs to be taken.

## **Findings**

The grade one children in this study were able to rethink negative statements and turn them into positive statements. This was evident when 90.1% of students were able to completely remove all the negative words, from Statements 1 to 9 (see Figure 5), and replace them with all positive words. These statements derived from my personal experiences and the affirmations I have heard children say over the years. Furthermore, they were chosen based on the frequency of the specific hurtful words that the children used in their overt self-talk. The statements also aligned with what was targeted in the large group lessons. As referred to in Chapter 3, students and their parents were given Statements 1 to 4 prior to the interviews. This was an attempt by me to help the parents understand the type of statements their children have been practicing to rethink in class and to be prepared for what was going to be asked during their interview. Moreover, it provided the student participants with the option to prepare, practice and rethink these statements. During the interviews, they were asked to rethink those four statements with no visual support (reminders of what words were red and what words were green). Statements 5 to 9 were given to the students the day of their interview and they had the visual chart (as shown in Table 12) to support them in their rethinking process. This was to highlight the students' spontaneous and independent ability to rethink affirmations.

Statement 1: Don't eat that.  
Statement 2: I never get to go in the front of the line.  
Statement 3: I can't do it.  
Statement 4: I am not very good at math.  
Statement 5: I don't know how to read.  
Statement 6: I'll never get to sharpen the pencils.  
Statement 7: I am not good at writing.  
Statement 8: I can't draw very well.  
Statement 9: I'll try to clean up my table.

*Figure 5.* Interview statements

For each of the above statements, there are student examples to highlight how children rethought the affirmations as shown in Tables 11 and 12 below. This data exemplifies and illuminates the children's meta-cognitive abilities. That is, taking hurtful words out of statements and replacing them with helpful words. The data revealed that the children did benefit from the simple and concise strategies learned to rethink statements and were able to implement them. Children were more successful with phrases that were practiced in the classroom. This is true for any ability or skill; the more you practice the better you get.

From analyzing the data, there were five different categories that emerged from the student participants' rethought affirmations:

G-Only green and helpful words are used in the new statement

R- Only red or hurtful words are used in the new statement

C-Combination of red and green words are used in the new statement

U- Unclear of the meaning of the new statement

F-Friend-talk

I identified statements that had “you” in them as friend-talk versus self-talk. This was necessary for students to understand the difference between saying positive words to themselves (I) and positive words to others (you). Nelsen (2006) recognized this as “encouragement” (pp. 141-142). The students used the same words they learned in self-talk (*I* statements) except they used them to motivate a peer (*You* statement).

Table 10 shares the data collected from Statements 1 to 4. There were 19 responses for each statement, which in total equaled to 76 responses. The first statement, “Don’t eat that,” was new to the students since they had never practiced it before. The other four statements were familiar to the students because they practiced similar affirmations in the large and small group settings. This may be a reason why there was a discrepancy between the numbers of successful affirmations that were rethought between the first statement and the other four statements.

Table 10

*Statements 1 to 4 Analyzed*

Statement	Green	Red	Combined	Unclear	Friend-talk
Don’t eat that.	2	3	1	8	5
I never get to go in the front of the line.	17	0	1	0	1
I can’t do it.	17	0	1	0	1
I am not very good at math.	15	0	1	0	3
Total	51	3	4	8	10
Percentage	67.1%	3.9%	5.3%	10.5%	13.2%

The majority of the grade one students (67.1%) used only green words when they changed the hurtful sentences to a helpful affirmation. There were only 4 children who used a combination of red and green words. This demonstrates that there was change

occurring in the student's self-talk and that new strategies were being implemented but perhaps not to the extent that was aimed for. Eventually with frequent practice, it would be anticipated that the new helpful words would replace all the red words.

The data revealed that the statement that was the most difficult for the students to rethink was "Don't eat that." Most of them just removed the "don't" from the statement and said, "Eat that" or "Please eat that." The students removed the word "don't" but it was unclear if they meant to change the meaning of the statement. Technically the students didn't use a hurtful word, but the message wasn't clear and could be potentially hurtful (if students are saying to eat what they actually want the person to avoid). As a result, it fits under the unclear category. It was uncertain if they stated what they wanted or if they just reinstated the same statement without the word "don't." Interestingly, if that was the case, it shows that children focus on the end part of a sentence after the negative word is used (in this case, "eat that"). This could mean that they thought that what was after the word "don't" was actually what you wanted. However, students can learn to express the desired behavior as shown by some example student responses in Table 11. For instance, student eight rethought that statement to "Please eat something else." It needs to be recognized, from the data, that the word *don't* at times can be challenging to rethink. This is because this word is used in a variety of contexts. Through mindfulness and purposeful attention, some of the students heard the word *don't* and changed all the words to state the thought or behavior they truly desired.

It should be noted that if the statement "Don't eat that" was taken out of the data then 86% were able to use only green words in a self-talk statement and 7% used them in encouraged talk. This results in 91% of all the students using only green words. They

were successfully and clearly rethinking each of their statements. There was a small portion of students, which was 3.9%, who used only red words in their changed statement and again it was only for the statement “Don’t eat that.”

Table 11 shows the students’ rethought responses to these statements. For the combined statements, the words that are hurtful are italicized and the words that are helpful are underlined to highlight how the students are using both words in the same statement. Table 11 reveals a representation of the different types of the students’ responses from Statements 1 to 4. Please see Appendix H for all of the student participants’ responses.

Table 11

*Student Responses to Statements 1 to 4*

Statement	Student Examples
Don’t eat that.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S3-U: Can you please eat that.</li> <li>• S6-G: Would you please keep your hand away from it.</li> <li>• S8-G: (pause 9 s) Please eat something else.</li> <li>• S17-C: May you <u>please</u> <i>not</i> eat that.</li> <li>• S18-R: You shouldn’t eat that.</li> </ul>
I never get to go in the front of the line.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S2-G: I am patient. I can wait. Next time I will get a turn at the front of the line.</li> <li>• S7-G: Everywhere is a good spot.</li> <li>• S10-C: <u>Sometimes</u> you <u>can</u> <i>budge me</i>.</li> <li>• S16-G: When I be the line leader, I will get to be in the front of the line or birthday.</li> </ul>
I can’t do it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S9-E: You can do it.</li> <li>• S13-G: I will do it.</li> <li>• S15-G: I can do it. I just need some practice.</li> <li>• S18-G: I can. The more I practice, the better I’ll get.</li> </ul>
I am not very good at math.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S1-G: I am good at math or I can do it and I just need some help.</li> <li>• S4-G: I am good at math.</li> <li>• S14-C: I <u>am</u> <i>trying</i> my <u>best</u> at math.</li> <li>• S15-G: (pause 6 s) I (pause 6 s) I know, but I do know what to do in science but I’ll practice what to do in math.</li> </ul>

The majority of students, when asked, were able to independently rethink the above statements. As mentioned earlier, the students who combined the red and green words were beginning to prove their ability to implement new strategies. After conducting the first set of interview questions, I realized it was significant to specifically ask the children to orally communicate the specific words in each step of the Stop, Rethink, Go strategy. By asking the students to identify the specific words by themselves, it confirmed their awareness and ability to implement new strategies. Table 12 shows the data from the Statements 5 to 9 broken down into the three steps (Stop, Rethink, Go). For each affirmation students were asked to identify the red word, rethink the statement and then identify the green words in their new statement. The color red indicates hurtful or negative words, the color yellow represents the rethinking process (I can make this better) and the color green represents helpful or positive words, which are shown below in Table 12. Please see Appendix I for all of the student examples for Statements 5 to 9.

Table 12

*Three Step Process of Self-talk: Statements 5 to 9*

Statement	Hurtful	Rethink	Helpful
I can't draw very well.	17	19	17
I'll try to clean up my table.	16	17	17
I don't know how to read.	18	19	15
I'll never get to sharpen the pencils.	19	19	17
I am not good at writing.	19	19	18
Total: 95 Reponses	89	93	84
Percentage	93.7%	97.9%	88.4%

The results revealed that a large majority of the grade one students could successfully identify the red words in the above statements. Furthermore, most of the students could identify the green words. This provides evidence that students can independently and successfully identify hurtful words and replace them with helpful words when they have been taught strategies about how to do this. Some of the students were able to identify the self-talk helpful words, which included, can, do, better, sometimes, will, practice and help. While other students identified basic helpful words and these included: good, best, well and please. From the 95 responses from statements five to nine, 63 students (66.3%) used self-talk words, 20 students (21.1%) used basic words, and 12 students (12.6%) shared words that were unclear (I, get, how, be and a). If the students could identify either helpful self-talk words or helpful basic words that was accounted for in the results. The more positive words that the students knew, the more able they were to identify them and comment on how these words made them feel.

The statement that challenged the students the most attempting to identify the green word was in Statement 5, which again had the word *don't* in it. As mentioned above, that word can be more of a challenge because it is used in a variety of statements and students may not recognize what the green word is once they rethink the statement. Regardless, even if they were unable to specifically identify the exact red or green word, they successfully rethought the statement. Ninety eight percent of the students rethought the statements to helpful affirmations.

All of the statements provided could be used in the school context. I intentionally used those statements because this is where the children practiced using these skills. The five statements had the five red words that were targeted for them to recognize and

rethink. The data revealed that the majority of the students could successfully rethink statements even if they weren't yet able to specifically identify the helpful or hurtful words. The hurtful words that were to be identified were: don't, never, not, can't and try. Students were more successful in rethinking "I don't know how to read," than "Don't eat that." Again, the same strategy was used where most children took the word *don't* out and reinstated the rest of the statement. For those students who rethought the statement with *don't*, there were seven children that had difficulty identifying the green word and 12 were able to accurately identify the green word. Table 13 provides examples of the students implementing the 3-step process. See Appendix I for all of the student responses to affirmations.

Table 13

*Student Examples from Statements 5 to 9*

Statement	Hurtful	Rethink	Helpful
I can't draw very well.	S5: very, can't	S5: The more I practice, the better I get.	S5: (pause 5 s) practice, better
	S17: (pause 7 s) I can't	S17: (pause 6 s) I can learn from others.	S17: I can
I'll try to clean up my table.	S7: try	S7: I will clean up my table.	S7: will
	S10: try	S10: I want to clean up my table.	S10: want
I don't know how to read.	S2: don't	S2: I can read.	S2: can
	S13: don't	S13: I will practice to read.	S13: practice
I'll never get to sharpen the pencils.	S4: never	S4: I will get a turn to sharpen the pencil.	S4: (pause 13 s) I will
	S11: never	S11: I am patient. I can wait. I will sharpen my pencil.	S11: patient (pause 8 s) and (pause 5 s) can, wait

Statement	Hurtful	Rethink	Helpful
I am not good at writing.	S1: not	S1: (pause 11 s) I need help with writing.	S1: help
	S12: not	S12: I am good at writing.	S12: good

Students can identify both hurtful and helpful words, which revealed that the large group lessons and practice in the classroom helped the students remember and implement this information. The above affirmations proved that the students exhibited the understanding of helpful self-talk. Furthermore, students were able to share their ability to catch and change hurtful words into helpful words, which is shown in Appendix J.

#### **Part 4: Student Thoughts on Self-talk**

The aim of this research was to understand the *impact* particular strategies have on grade one students' self-talk. Even at a young age, students can express their likes and dislikes. Therefore, it was significant to ask the students, from their viewpoint, to share their understanding of self-talk and its value for them in learning. From my work with grade ones on this topic and from the interviews conducted, it is apparent to me that the student participants' perspectives and voices matter in taking into consideration the effect of teaching about self-talk. Reflecting upon and analyzing my data, I realized that the last two questions focused primarily on the participants' viewpoints. These questions were:

(10) Do you think it is important to learn self-talk?

(11) How has self-talk helped you?

The results revealed that 18 children felt there was value in learning self-talk, and only one shared that it wasn't important to learn self-talk. Moreover, these children could identify the benefit(s) received from their year-long experience with self-talk. The

students effectively communicated why self-talk was important to them and how it has helped them in a variety of ways. Please see Appendix K and L for all student responses to Questions 10 and 11.

Table 14

*Student Voice*

Is Self-talk Important?	Is Self-talk Helpful?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S2: Yes</li> <li>• T: Why?</li> <li>• S2: Because then you know what to say to myself when I feel angry.</li> <li>• S4: Yeah</li> <li>• T: Why do you think it is important to learn self-talk? S4: Because you would have to rethink those bad words or hurtful words and you have to change them to helpful words.</li> <li>• S13: Yeah</li> <li>• T: Why do you think it is important to learn self-talk?</li> <li>• S13: Cause if you say a bad word you need to rethink it. And if you learn self-talk you when you say a bad word, now you can rethink it.</li> <li>• S14: Yeah it is very, very good important. Because if you always think hurtful thoughts, you might get meaner every time you think about one.</li> <li>• T: So what do you think would happen if you learned more helpful words or green words?</li> <li>• S14: You would get really nice and you would treat other children like they are your best friend.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S4: I can rethink into good words.</li>   <li>• S7: A lot. When I think of bad words in my head, I just stop, rethink, go.</li>   <li>• S13: Good</li> <li>• T: It has been good? How come it is good?</li> <li>• S13: Cause if I say a bad word, my brain says rethink it.</li>   <li>• S14: S: Because sometimes I think red words in my mind and self-talk um makes all the red words go away.</li> <li>• T: What do they turn into?</li> <li>• S14: Green words.</li> </ul>

Is Self-talk Important?	Is Self-talk Helpful?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S16: Yes because we will learn new words and use kind words.</li> <li>• T: What new words did you learn from self-talk?</li> <li>• S16: I learn “My turn will come and I can do it.”</li> <li>• S19: Yeah. T: Why do you think it is important to learn self-talk?</li> <li>• S19: You can say nice words to your brain instead of bad words like red words to your brain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S15: Helped me, you . . . I do, sometimes I don’t want to read, right and then my brain says “read” so then I read.</li> <li>• S19: It helped me by saying good words to my brain.</li> </ul>

From their responses to these two questions at the end of the school year, it appears that students recognized that self-talk assists in creating and sustaining helpful thought patterns. The children shared in their own words that self-talk was valuable to them and what they have learned from it. The students could relate to the terminology learned in self-talk because they used it to communicate its importance. They discussed helpful (green words) and/or hurtful words (red words); how self-talk impacted their feelings and how they learned new words. Furthermore, they were able to give specific examples of affirmations they learned. It is possible to suggest that some students realized that self-talk supports the development of a positive mind.

Their answers to these two questions may appear simple, but they provide valuable insight into their understanding of the concept of self-talk and their ability to meta-cognitively rethink statements. Stanulis and Manning (2002) shared the “critical role [of teachers for] establishing the verbal . . . environment in the early childhood classroom” (p. 3). They also recognized that the classroom environment impacts students development of their sense of self, self-worth and motivation to achieve (p. 3). Explicit

strategies and teacher modeling have been proven beneficial from the data and even the students themselves confirmed that self-talk was significant to learn.

### **Conclusion**

Helmstetter (1982) indicated that “it makes no difference how harmless the words seems at the time, they are the backbone of everything which works against us and stands in our way” (p. 73). The children became aware of their inner voices and learned how to identify the positive and negative self-talk within. Awareness is the foundational step for change to commence and to create new understandings. A person has to be aware of what to change and then consciously use new strategies to create a different experience and reality.

Children’s thinking can be altered positively when taught simple and concise meta-cognitive strategies. Students need to learn explicitly what words are positive and negative and then acknowledge mindfully when they are using those words. This awareness gives students self-control and responsibility. Being helpful and thoughtful is a choice and the more the children practice it, the more natural it becomes.

Students need repetition and practice for anything to become a habit. Therefore, students need to implement the new strategies in their daily activities and experiences. The teacher is a role model to show students *how* to implement self-talk skills. This includes using strategies that teach and remind students to rethink the use of negative self-talk and asking them questions to reflect on their word choice. Initially, students need support, but once self-talk has been practiced, students become independent and can recognize and rethink both positive and negative self-talk within themselves and others.

Self-talk nurtures and expands the worth of oneself. It provides and builds confidence. Wherever we go, whatever situation we encounter, we are always with ourselves. Students can learn to become their own best friends. If we, as teachers, become mindful and change so that our self-talk is positive, we will create students who are confident in whom they are and will believe in their abilities. Furthermore, they will willingly and openly want to learn and grow by acquiring the skills that will make them successful.

Self-talk is being mindful, supportive, willing to grow, compassionate and loving towards ourselves. Self-talk is a strategy that helps students to cope and is active and purposeful. Curry and Russ (1985) noted, “successful coping experiences in childhood enhance the general flexibility and resiliency of the child” (p. 62). Self-talk builds understanding where our strengths lie, finds solutions to various problems or challenges and enhances the skills that need improvement.

Children learning self-talk during their younger years, just like mathematics and literacy, will build foundational life skills that will help them as they move forward in this ever-changing world. Regardless if the outside world changes around us, the inside world can stay constant and positive when the right kind of self-talk is implemented.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **Findings and Understandings**

From the data analysis of the student results, it is evident that the new strategies provided students with meta-cognitive abilities to become aware of their negative thoughts and to change them. There were many statements that students said automatically without placing very much thought into how they are impacted by them.

The study provided students with a new awareness and brought their unconscious thoughts to the conscious realm.

The direct affirmations that were taught throughout the school year proved to be valuable. They gave the students a basic foundation of affirmations that were easy to recall and implement after a negative affirmation was spoken. The majority of the students could easily identify and rethink various statements that had the specific negative words that were targeted and taught in class. In the interviews, many of the students used the affirmations that were directly taught in class. The students were therefore able to rethink the affirmations that were practiced in the large group. For example, one student rethought “I can’t draw very well” to “The more I practice, the better I get.” The large group affirmations became a benchmark to alter other affirmations and to create new personalized affirmations. For instance, for the same affirmation, “I can’t draw very well,” another student rethought it to, “I can draw really well. I just need some practice with my teacher.” Furthermore, there were students who successfully reworded or recreated the large group affirmation. This demonstrated that the students’ independence in changing their self-talk appeared to come after the foundation of self-talk was taught and practiced.

The explicit teaching of self-talk through specific self-talk lessons along with teacher modeling proved to be necessary for students to rethink their own thoughts. For change to occur in students, new skills need to be taught, modeled and then put into action. Due to their age, the students needed reminders to rethink their thoughts. This was accomplished when I asked, “Is that helpful or hurtful?” or “Did you use a red or green word?” Students would also help each other by saying, “Rethink” when they heard a

classmate say a red word. These reminders and questions made students reflect and take personal responsibility of the words they used. The automatic negative thoughts would go unchecked if students were not reminded to rethink them. As students practiced these skills, they became more able to independently catch their own hurtful thoughts.

Over time the students recognized the connection between their thoughts and their emotions. This was important for students to realize because their feelings help them understand if their thoughts are working for or against them. Students associated negative words with feelings of sadness and anger and positive words with feelings of joy and excitement. It is an important premise for students to understand the impact thoughts and emotions have on themselves and others. In the future, therefore, if they are feeling a certain way then they can ask themselves, “Am I thinking hurtful or helpful thoughts?”

Patience and practice are of the utmost importance to acquire these new affirmations and to rethink hurtful thoughts. For students to change their thoughts, teachers need to be supportive by reminding them to rethink affirmations. Students need frequent practice for positive affirmations to replace old habitual negative patterns. For anything to take hold *long* term, one needs to consistently practice. From this study, this regularity resulted in changing counterproductive thoughts to productive empowering thoughts.

In terms of teaching, it is important for students to learn that it is okay to say what they *don't* want as long as they state what they *do* want at the end of their sentences. For example, a teacher could say, “I *don't* want you to talk. I *would like* you to sit quietly with your lips together so you can hear the instructions please.” Explicit words need to be

spoken to have the desired behavior come to life. The word *don't* is what makes it clear what the *want* is.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This was the first year that I created and implemented formal self-talk lessons on Smart Notebook. I took the information I learned from various resources and created kid-friendly lessons. This was a learning process for me, and new ideas emerged as I progressed through the lessons. In hindsight, and through the experiences I had with my students, I recognize how to strengthen these lessons for future use. If this study were to be conducted again, I would recreate and revise some of the lessons to be even more advantageous to the students. For instance, I would introduce the traffic light and the chart with red and green words (as shown in Chapter 3) earlier on in the school year. This would visually support and remind students what words impact their well-being and beliefs across curricular activities.

The data was compiled solely through interviews. This study did not highlight the impact self-talk strategies had in the classroom during everyday activities. Though interviews were meaningful and students' voices were honored, it would have been beneficial to hear their voices and meta-cognitive strategies applied in their natural settings. This is mentioned below as one of the areas for future research to be conducted.

This study focused only on the nineteen students who were in my grade one class. It would be valuable to repeat this study with a larger population of student participants. Furthermore, it would be interesting to have a longitudinal study to reveal the effect of self-talk beyond grade one. This would note what knowledge the students retained and continued to implement.

## **Future Directions**

The data gathered and interpreted for this study revealed several areas where future research could be conducted. The students' voices and understandings were essential to capture the impact self-talk had on children. The interviews were suitable to learn what skills students acquired from the self-talk lessons. Their voices can be further understood and deepened through the four areas for future research mentioned below.

First, there needs to be more studies conducted like this one in order to have a larger sample population. This would allow more voices to be heard and potentially reveal the larger impact self-talk could have on the educational system.

Second, this research project solely focused on grade one students. Self-talk could be taught across the educational spectrum and to students at any age or grade level. It would be beneficial to conduct year-long self-talk lessons with a variety of grade levels to see the impact they have on those students and what skills would be acquired and placed into action.

Third, it would be beneficial to do a longitudinal study of self-talk. The data would reveal what the students remember and continue to implement as they move forward in their educational journey. This would reveal the benefits self-talk have on students socially, emotionally, behaviorally and academically over the long term.

Fourth, it would be beneficial to document students' rethinking negative statements to positive statements during classroom experiences. For instance, students talk to themselves on a daily basis. Documenting and analyzing their self-talk in their natural setting would benefit the educational system by revealing how students are able to recognize and rethink affirmations in various academic and social settings. Furthermore,

it would reveal how self-talk impacts people's beliefs and understandings of what they are capable of achieving. This would document how self-talk could be of benefit to students' confidence and motivation in school.

### **Final Thoughts**

Self-talk is beneficial and is a necessity for students to learn. Self-talk prepares “students to responsibly solve [their personal and] life's problems” (Tate, 2001, p. 218). It is a coping mechanism that is active and purposeful and produces children who can problem solve (Curry & Russ, 1985; Scheier & Carver, 1993). Students take ownership and control of their internal state, which impacts them wherever they go and whatever they may experience. There are a large number of thoughts that are counterproductive to all of us and they hinder our growth. By learning explicit positive self-talk strategies one can become aware of the thoughts and specific words that create feelings of hopelessness and defeat and replace them with words that instill possibilities and confidence. This process results in students who live lives of “believing in oneself” (cited in Bénabou & Tirole, 2002, p. 876). Students who are strong with positive “self-talk” will thrive personally, emotionally, socially and academically in this ever-changing world.

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## Appendix A

### Question 1 – What is self-talk?

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S1: It's like all the hurtful words and the helpful words that you taught to other kids parents.

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S2: I like to play.

T: What makes that self-talk?

S2: That (pause 8 s) I like . . . (pause 10 s)

T: If you had to tell somebody what is self-talk, what you have you learned from class, what self-talk is.

S2: It is something that you talk to yourself.

---

S3: It is about helpful words and hurtful words.

T: Is there anything else you would like to share about self-talk?

S3: Self-talk, you talk and sometimes when you say a hurtful word you rethink it and say it to a green word.

---

S4: Hurtful words mean bad words and good words mean nice words.

T: So what did we learn what self-talk means.

S4: It means stuff that are helpful and stuff that are hurtful.

---

S5: Self talk is something that you can, if you are so like, you can talk to yourself about stuff like what are you feeling and how you think if everything is like sad for you or something. Cause if you could like, it is like a bubble, and you like you think when you are talking and then you talk to yourself about what do I felt like, do I feel sad or do I feel mad and stuff, and also self-talk is something your feeling sad, you just want to talk to yourself and have space.

*Very personal to her situation.*

---

S6: It's about when you talk about and what you say in your brain.

---

S7: S: Self-talk is when you talk in your head and you don't say any words with your mouth.

---

S8: (pause 7 s)

T: Take your time. What did we learn what self-talk is?

S8: I forgot. When I left, I forgot.

T: I know because you went away. Right?

S8: *Nods head agreeing.*

T: So, why don't you make a prediction? What do you think self-talk is?

S8: Being nice.

---

---

S9: Pause 5 s (*looked a bit confused*).

T: What did we learn about self-talk in class?

S9: I don't remember.

T: Make a prediction

S9: *15 s pause*

T: Self-talk is where we looked at green words and red words. So what does green words mean?

S9: Don't

T: Is that green or red?

S9: Red.

T: Yes.

---

S10: Talk in your brain.

T: Anything else?

S10: Talk in your brain and talk to yourself in your brain.

---

S11: Self-talk is helpful and hurtful words.

---

S12: (pause 11 s) Self-talk means you talk yourself.

---

S13: Self-talk is if you say a hurtful word need to rethink it, you need to change to helpful word.

---

S14: It's like you talk in your head and you can say helpful words or hurtful words. It's best if you say helpful words.

---

S15: Self-talk is that you talk in your brain

---

S16: Self-talk is that you say something in your mind.

---

S17: Self-talk that actually, you can actually talk to yourself.

---

S18: Self-talk is when, if you feel tight inside, that's self talk and when you calm down that is self talk and when you think of good stuff in your brain that is self talk.

---

S19: Self-talk is the words you say to your brain.

---

## Appendix B

### Question 2 – What are hurtful words or red words?

---

S1: Don't, didn't, never, not, (pause 6 s), try, but (pause 8 s).

S2: Hurtful words are "I don't" And helpful words are and like

T: Do you know any other hurtful words or red words that we have learned in class?

S2: Don't, not and I can and I like.

T: Is "I can" and "I like" hurtful or helpful?

S2: Helpful

T: So only think of hurtful words or red words.

S2: not and never, try (pause 12 s)

T: That is good, thank you.

---

S3: When I say, "I don't, never have a turn" I rethink it and say "I am patient, I can wait."

T: Are there any red words you remembered we learned in class?

S3: Yeah.

T: What are those red words?

S3: I never get to draw. Then I rethink it to "I get a turn to draw."

T: Anything else?

S3: And, when we do self-talk, when they you helpful words and we can't think of something else, we can look at the paper (*rethink page with hurtful and helpful words*) and rethink something. And we can look at a word and put it in our brain.

---

S4: Red words mean you say a bad word and the other person gets mad.

T: What is a bad word? What do you mean by a bad word?

S4: Like if you say, don't touch it and that thing it was smelly and you can't touch it. It was normal hot and cold on it and you are not allowed to touch it and other person says now you can touch it and the other person says no.

T: What were some red words that we learned that we want to stop saying because they are hurtful?

S4: don't, want, not, don't touch

T: Anything else?

S4: *Nods head* "No."

---

S5: Hurtful words is like, I don't like you and it's like I just . . . (pause 5 s).

T: What are some red words we learned in class?

S5: Oh its like, never, "I will never get a turn" and it is like, it could also be "My turn won't come" and "I can't do it" and (pause 6 s) your brain can say, "I don't like this friend" and "My turn won't come" but it really sad when you say that and lots of mean words can hurt someone's feelings.

---

S6: Red words are "I don't like you" or if you are and "You are bad." And helpful words are "I like you" and "You are the best writer."

T: So, what are some hurtful words that we have learned in class?

S6: Don't, never, not and I don't like. That is really bad.

---

---

S7: S: Hurtful words are bad. Hmmm let me think, (pause 5 s)

T: Take your time

S7: (7 s) I do not like you. I got it right, two. The “H” word that my mom doesn’t like me saying. It has a-t-e in it. Hmmm.

T: Is there anything else you can think of?

S: No (um, um)

---

S8: (pause 5 s) Like don’t is a red word.

T: Are there any other red words that you know?

S8: Do not is a red word and, and is a nice word.

T: You are right.

---

S9: (pause 9 s). I like you.

T: Was that red words or green words?

S9: Green.

T: So what are red words? What are hurtful words that we learned?

S9: (pause 11 s) “I don’t like you.”

T: Do you remember anything else?

S9: *Shakes head no*

---

S10: Like, the worst bad word is stupid.

T: Okay, and what other red word did we learned in class?

S10: “You’re mean.” And “I don’t like you” and “I don’t want to be your friend.” And “I hate you.”

---

S11: Don’t, (pause 13 s), don’t and didn’t

T: Do you know anything else?

S11: Yeah, dumb and don’t.

---

S12: (pause 7 s) Like you something say a red word.

T: Do you know what those red words are? (*nodded head*).

T: What are they?

S12: Don’t (pause) and not (pause 4 s), try.

---

S13: Red words are don’t and hurtful are please.

T: Hurtful is please?

S13: No I mean helpful.

---

S14: Don’t is a red word and “You budge” is sort of a red word and “I don’t want to be your friend” is a red word. And um, uh, “I don’t like you” is a red word.

---

S15: Hurtful words are “you are not the best” and “you are not great.”

T: Do you remember what are the red words we learned in class?

S15: (pause 8 s). I think

T: Go ahead and do your best.

S15: (pause 5 s) What is . . . (pause 8 s) “I can’t do it” and (pause 8 s) “I don’t know anything.”

---

S16: Hurtful words are don’t, never and try and never.

---

---

S17: Hurtful words are actually, when you actually say mean words and the red words are when you actually say very bad words.

T: Do you know what some of them are?

S17: Uh huh.

T: What are they?

S17: "Never" and "Stop doing that." You have to say something kinder.

T: Are there any other red words that you know of?

S17: Not that much, well I just know a couple.

T: Okay.

---

S18: Red words are don't, never, I hate you (pause 8 s). That's the worst. That's bad.

---

S19: Hate, never, don't, didn't, hate.

---

## Appendix C

### Question 3 – How do hurtful words make you feel?

---

S1: Sometimes they make me sad and they also make me angry.

T: Why?

S1: Because, it is kind of like bothering me and making fun of me.

---

S2: Sad or cry.

T: Does it make you feel anything else?

S2: *Shakes head no.*

---

S3: Sad.

T: Anything else?

S3: And helpful words make you happy.

---

S4: Sad or sometimes they make you mad.

---

S5: Hurtful words make you feel sad, angry or like it's real.

T: It's real?

S5: Yeah like its true, cause it is really sad when a person says "I don't like you" or person says or gets really mad at one person and it gets really hurtful and then they say hurtful words like to their selves. Another person helps them but they say first mean words to them and then its sad. It gets so sad, like "my turn will never come."

---

S6: Sad and angry.

---

S7: Sad or mad.

---

S8: It makes you feel angry or sad.

---

S9: Sad

---

S10: Sad and mad or sometimes make you really sad and really mad. When you get really mad, you like don't want to talk to that friend ever again or tell the teacher that what. Then the teacher will like say, "next time you can say a good word." And then he says sorry, really really sorry for making the bad words to you and making fun of you. That is bad. That is so bad.

---

S11: Sad

T: Anything else?

S11: And Angry.

T: Why?

S11: Because if somebody say hurtful words to him, he gonna get angry.

T: How about if you say hurtful words to yourself?

S11: It will not help you.

---

S12: Sad.

T: Why?

S12: Because hurtful words is hurt.

---

---

S13: Sad.

T: Do they make you feel anything else?

S13: Mad

T: Anything else?

S13: Frustrated.

T: Anything else?

S13: *Shakes head no.*

---

S14: Sad.

T: Did they make you feel any other things?

S14: Sometimes mad.

---

S15: Sad and really mad.

---

S16: They make us sad, sometimes angry.

---

S17: Sad.

T: Why?

S17: Cause actually it hurts someone's feelings when you actually say a bad word.

T: How does it make you feel inside when you say something mean inside?

S17: Not that good.

---

S18: Upset and sad inside.

---

S19: Sad, angry, mad.

---

## Appendix D

### Question 4 – What words are helpful words or green words?

---

S1: Help, can, I am, (pause 19 s), thank you (pause 7 s) nothing else.

S2: The hurtful words . . .

T: Helpful, What are the helpful words or green words we have learned?

S2: (pause 8 s). Thoughtful, I can (pause 14 s)

T: Anything else?

S2: *Nods head no.*

---

S3: Green, helpful words mean and hurtful words are mean and helpful words are helpful.

T: Do you remember any of the green words we've learned in class?

S3: *Nods head yes*

T: What are those green words?

S3: I am patient and I get a turn and I don't know something else.

T: That is good.

---

S4: Helpful words are something, "Hi, do you want to be my friend?"

T: What are some green words we want to say?

S4: Can, you, go, please, thank you, (pause 8 s). I don't know more.

---

S5: Green words are like, "I can do this" and it is like "I will get a turn." Other helpful words are that are so hurtful that it makes another person feel sad.

T: Remember helpful words.

S5: Helpful words are great because it is fun to say them and they make you grow stronger like those plants. *(For the unit of Needs of Plants and animals we did an experiment. We had a helpful plant and a hurtful plant. Each flower seed received the same amount of sunlight, water, air and soil. The only difference was that students would say different messages to the seeds. For the hurtful one, students would say things like "You will never grow," and for the helpful one they would say, "I love you and you are growing to grow strong." What ended up happening is the hurtful seed sprouted first and started growing quickly. A week later the helpful seed sprouted and started to grow. The hurtful plant stopped growing at a certain height and withered away. The helpful plant continued to grow strong.)* And it goes very well when you say them.

---

S6: "You are the best." "You are good and you are good at soccer" and "you are good at writing."

T: So do you know what words we have learned in class that are green words?

S6: Yeah, please, would . . . I would like, please, and you're the best.

T: Is there any other green words you remember?

S6: Not exactly.

T: Okay.

---

S7: Helpful words are I do like you, love you, and that is all I can think of.

T: Are there any green words you can remember that we learned in class?

S7: Friendship

---

---

S8: Green words are nice words that make you happy.

T: Why would they make you happy?

S8: Because it (pause 14 s). Because helpful words make you feel good and if you say “thank you” you could, the other person could say, “you’re welcome.”

T: Do you remember some green words that we learned?

S8: *Nods head yes*

T: What were they?

S8: do, and (pause 13 s). I remember one more (pause 13 s).

T: Take your time.

S8: (pause 12 s) Help.

---

S9: (pause 5 s)

T: What are green words?

S9: (pause 5 s) Thank you

T: What else?

S9: You’re welcome

T: What else?

S9: 3 s . . . I don’t know . . .

T: Keep thinking. What are green, helpful words that we learned?

S9: (pause 7 s) Nice. (pause 9 s) I don’t know.

T: Okay.

---

S10: The greenest word is “I am” and the strongest word is “I am” too.

T: Is there any other green words that you know? I like you. I want to be your friend and you are nice to everybody. You make a good friend.

---

S11: Nice, fun, everyone, and can I use the card? (I had cards on the table for strategies when they get stuck and need help. This was provided in the Smart Notebook Lessons given to them earlier)

T: Yes.

S11: Can, like, and that is it.

---

S12: (pause 10 s) You can try.

T: What do you remember in the class that were green words or helpful words?

S12: (pause 37 s)

T: Can you remember any?

S12: No

---

S13: (pause 8 s) Green words are please, hi, bye, friend and helpful are don’t, not and (pause 8 s) and do not.

---

S14: I like you. You are very good. You are smart. You are brave. You are fast. You are strong and I really like you.

T: What are some helpful words you say to yourself?

S14: I can do it and um I am brave.

---

S15: I can do it. I am best. I know this. I have lots of friends. I can do it. I just need some help.

---

S16: Green words are that, can you, can, please and (pause 9s), can, please and (pause 13 s) some words I don’t know I just know the two.

---

---

S17: Helpful words are when you say kind words and green words are when you say really good words like compliments.

T: Can you give me an example?

S17: Helpful, instead of actually hugging someone you give them a handshake. Instead of actually saying something bad, you have to say something nice, really nice, like that's a pretty picture.

T: What are some green words we learned in class?

S17: A green word that we learned in class is, "You can do it" or "I am patient. I can wait."

T: Anything else?

S17: No.

---

S18: You are a nice friend. (pause 13 s) lucky, great, nice that's all I remember.

---

S19: Like, love, do, and you.

---

## Appendix E

### Question 5 – How do helpful words or green words make you feel?

---

S1: They make happy.

T: Why do they make you happy?

S1: Because if someone says a really kind word then I then that would be really kind and so then I wouldn't be sad or angry I would be happy.

T: How do you feel when kind words to yourself?

S1: I feel calm.

---

S2: Happy and they make you feel like to play with them.

T: Play with who?

S2: My friends.

---

S3: Green, helpful words mean and hurtful words are mean and helpful words are helpful.

T: Do you remember any of the green words we've learned in class?

S3: *Nods head yes*

T: What are those green words?

S3: I am patient and I get a turn and *I don't know something else.*

T: That is good.

---

S4: Happy

T: Anything else?

S4: Somewhat excited.

T: Why do they make you feel happy and excited?

S4: Sometimes they say a really juicy green word and they some people get really excited.

---

S5: Oh they make me feel happy because I just like saying happy words because it is so fun with the helpful words because you get to say them a lot and they make you feel happy.

---

S6: Sad and angry and frustrated.

T: Helpful words make you feel that way?

S6: Actually no.

T: It is okay if that is how you feel. When people say those kinds words like to you like please, thank you, how does that make you feel?

S6: Happy, exciting and just more exciting.

---

S7: Happy

S8: Good.

---

S9: (pause 5 s).

T: How do nice words or happy words make you feel?

S9: Happy

T: Do they make you feel anything else?

S9: *Shakes head no.*

---

S10: Happy, maybe really happy. Inside your heart it makes you like talk to that friend everyday.

---

S11: If somebody says don't and rethink, and say nice words to them.

---

---

S12: Excited, happy and fun.

T: Why is that?

S12: Helpful words (pause 7 s). Helpful words are nice.

S12: Happy.

T: Why?

S12: Because helpful words make you feel happy

---

S13: *Sad, frustrated.*

T: Helpful words? How do green words make you feel?

S13: Happy

T: Anything else?

S13: *Shakes head no*

---

S14: Very happy. Want to make new friends and um be friendly to other children.

---

S15: Happy and not sad and really excited.

---

S16: They make us, helpful words make us happy and sometimes nice.

T: Anything else?

S16: No

---

S17: Helpful words make me feel happy.

T: Why?

S17: Because when someone says a helpful word it makes somebody feel happy.

---

S18: Happy inside and really excited and energetic.

---

S19: Happy, joyful

T: Why do those words make you feel that way?

S19: Because those are nice words.

---

## Appendix F

### Question 6 – How can you rethink hurtful words to make them helpful words?

---

S1: If you say a red more then you rethink and think of something but if you *don't know* what to saying then you can ask a friend for help.

---

S2: If you say, "I don't want to play with you" you can rethink it and say "I want to play with you."

T: What color is rethink?

S2: Yellow.

---

S3: You re . . . first when you say a red word you rethink it to a green word.

---

S4: If the other person says a hurtful word, the other person will say "what do you want?"

---

S5: If say "I can't do it" you should say, "I can do it." If you say, "Don't do that" you should say "please keep your hands to yourself." If you say, "I don't care," you should say "I don't . . . I do little bit care but somehow it doesn't matter a little." If you say, "I don't like you" you should say, "I am just not feeling that calm when you say that."

---

S6: S: Stop, rethink and go.

---

S7: S: Stop, rethink and then go.

---

S8: You could change "do not" to "please can you do something else."

T: Anything else? How can you change hurtful words to helpful words?

S8: Like, "Don't touch that," you could say, "Please keep your hands to yourself."

---

S9: (pause 5 s)

T: So if someone is being mean, how can we help them to be nice?

S9: Rethink.

T: Rethink. What does rethink mean? Can you show me with your hands?

S9: *She rolled her arms*

---

S10: Rethink, and go back and say "I am sorry, next time I'll say good words to you."

---

S11: If somebody says don't and rethink, and say nice words to them.

---

S12: We can change like first it was a "I don't like it." then it was "I like it."

---

S13: You need to rethink and then you go.

---

S14: You can go to like the bookshelf and look at the change word board. You can, if you said the red word you can switch it with the green word.

---

S15: You just first stop and you think of a really good word that you can say.

---

S16: You can rethink, "I never get a turn" you can rewind that "my turn will come."

T: Anything else?

S16: No

---

S17: If I say, "I never get a turn" "I can get a turn."

T: What do we do to change?

S17: "I am patient. I can wait." We do it in our heads instead of saying it out loud.

---

S18: You can do rethink, and then you can go back and say if you said, "I don't like you." You could rethink and say, "I like you."

---

S19: You can say it a different way.

---

## Appendix G

### Question 7 – How does that make you feel if you are able to rethink a hurtful to a helpful word?

---

S1: (pause 6 s). If it is kind of hard then I kind of feel happy cause then I did a hard one.

T: So if you did a hard one that makes you feel happy.

S1: Nods yes.

---

S2: Happy.

T: Why would it make you happy?

S2: Because I made the hurtful word into a helpful word.

---

S3: Red words, when you keep saying a red word, if you don't know what to say, you say it to a friend and that friend will help you. Then he will say a green word to you and then you will say the green word.

---

S4: First you feel sad and then when they say a hurtful word, a helpful word it will make you feel happy.

---

S5: It can make a person feel happy because if some people don't feel like, if they are every doing helpful things, it makes one person feel so sad, it goes to getting it sad because if you say a red word it's sad, if you change it to a green word its cause another person is happy and its really kind.

T: How do you feel when it is green?

S5: Happy

---

S6: Then you have to change it to a helpful word.

T: And how does that make you feel?

S6: It makes you happy after.

---

T: How does that make you feel when you can stop, rethink and go.

S7: Happy because then no one will get mad or sad.

T: How about you, when you say hurtful words to yourself, what do you do?

S7: Sad

T: How do you change that?

S7: Stop, rethink and go

---

S8: It makes you feel kind of happy.

T: Why kind of happy?

S8: Because if, because helping a friend and help them rethink, makes you feel a little bit happy because it makes you feel a little bit happy too.

---

S9: Happy

T: Happy.

---

S10: Happy and happy and really happy or sometimes you can be a little happy or sometimes you can be really happy.

---

S11: Happy.

T: because . . .

S11: Because we rethink and go.

---

---

S12: (pause 12 s).

T: If you say a mean word and change it to a nice word, how does that make you feel?  
(8 s)

S12: Sad.

T: So if you change a mean word to a nice word it makes you feel sad.

S12: *Shakes head no.*

T: How does it make you feel?

S12: Happy.

T: Why?

S12: Happy (pause 13 s)

T: Because . . . (pause 12 s). Do you know?

S12: *Shakes head no*

---

S13: Happy

T: Why?

Cause if you say a, like don't then you rethink it and the other person will, then the other person says sorry. Then the say the bad word, you would say sorry then he will rethink and then he will feel happy.

---

S14: Good.

---

S15: It makes you feel you really angry.

T: If you rethink it? How does it make you feel when you change hurtful words to helpful words?

S15: Feels, "I can do it."

---

S16: It makes us more calm.

---

S17: It makes me actually feel happy to actually help a friend when I actually do something, when I actually think of helpful words to help out hurtful words, I actually tell them, and then they actually sometimes say "okay" sometimes they its "not okay" cause sometimes they want to think of it by themselves.

T: Do you ever change hurtful words to yourself?

S17: Yeah sometimes I do.

T: What do you change them too?

S17: I actually change them to helpful words.

T: Do you do that by yourself?

S17: Uh huh.

---

S18: What?

T: When you rethink.

S18: Good.

T: Why?

S18: Because when you say a hurtful word, you might feel tight inside, and when you say a helpful and when you rethink you might feel better inside.

---

S19: Happy

T: Why?

S19: Because you are able to rethink.

---

## Appendix H

### Question 8 (Part One) – Rethinking Statements

***Rethink: “Don’t eat that.”***

---

S1: (pause 5 s) Can you (pause 7 s) stop eating that.

T: Did you tell what you wanted? You said “stop” so what do you want if you don’t want someone eat something.

S1: (pause 19 s). I need to think about it.

T: Okay we will come back to it.

*Second Attempt*

T: Don’t eat that.

S1: (pause 5 s) Can you please (pause 6 s) Can you please (6 s) May you (pause 13 s) you can eat it if you want.

---

S2: (pause 12 s). Please eat something else.

---

S3: Rethink it and say, “Can you please eat that.”

---

S4: Please can you eat that.

---

S5: You should say, (pause 7 s) “Can you please eat something else.”

---

S6: Would you please keep your hand away from it.

---

S7: Eat that.

---

S8: (pause 9 s) Please eat something else.

---

S9: Eat that.

---

S10: You can eat that if you want.

---

S11: (pause 9 s). We can eat together.

---

S12: (*Showed rethink action*) Eat that.

---

S13: You can eat that.

---

S14: Please (pause 22 s). Please wait and you can eat that when all of the children come.

S15: You just, you just, you just, you just, you can just know what is it and you know, and you just have to tell your mind this is not our food.

T: How would you say what you want? Instead of don’t eat that what do we want?

S15: We want you to not eat that so you don’t get sick.

T: If you don’t get sick, what do you want to stay?

S15: Really healthy and strong.

---

S16: May you please (pause 7 s), may you please (pause 13 s), may you please eat that later.

---

S17: May you please not eat that.

*Second Attempt*

T: With “don’t eat that” it is telling us what we don’t want. Do what we can tell someone so that they what we want. If we don’t want them to eat something, what do we want them to do?

S17: We want them to actually eat something else.

T: Good, so what could you say to them then?

---

S17: Could you please eat something else in your lunch bag or snack bag.

---

---

S18: You shouldn't eat that.

T: Remember to use a green word. So when I say, "don't eat that" how would you use it with a green word?

S18: If you want to eat that you can.

---

S19: Can you please keep your hands to yourself.

---

***Rethink: "I never get to go in the front of the line."***

---

S1: I will, I am patient. I can wait. I will get a turn to go to the front of the line.

S2: I am patient. I can wait. Next time I will get a turn at the front of the line.

---

S3: I will go to the front next time.

---

S4: S: Next time I will.

T: Next time I will?

S4: be at the front of the line.

---

S5: Next time, I will get to go in the front of the line.

---

S6: I am patient. I can wait.

---

S7: Everywhere is a good spot.

---

S8: I may go to the front of the line sometimes.

---

S9: You next time will go.

---

S10: Sometimes you can budge me.

---

S11: Okay, I am patient. I can wait.

---

S12: I get to go front of the line. (took out never)

---

S13: I will go to the front of the line.

---

S14: I would like a turn in the line.

---

S15: I can wait. I am patient. I can wait.

---

S16: When I be the line leader, I will get to be in the front of the line or birthday.

---

S17: Every spot is special.

---

S18: I am patient. I can wait.

---

S19: I'll sometimes get to go in the front of the line.

---

***Rethink: "I can't do it."***

---

S1: I can.

S2: I can do it.

---

S3: I am patient I can wait.

---

S4: I can do it.

---

S5: I can do it, I hope I can.

---

S6: I can do it.

---

S7: I can do it.

---

S8: (pause 9 s) I could help you.

---

S9: You can do it.

---

S10: I can do it.

---

S11: I can do it.

---

S12: I can do it.

---

S13: I will do it.

---

---

S14: You can rethink that with I can do it.

---

S15: I can do it. I just need some help.

---

S16: I can do it.

---

S17: I can do it.

---

S18: I can. The more I practice, the better I'll get.

---

S19: I can do it and I just need some help.

---

***Rethink: "I am not very good at math."***

---

S1: I am good at math or I can do it I just need some help.

---

S2: I am good at math.

---

S3: (pause 6 s) I work hard.

---

S4: I am good at math.

---

S5: The more you practice the better you get.

---

S6: I am good at math.

---

S7: I am good at math.

---

S8: S: I could help you on math.

---

T: So what if you say, "I am not very good at math?" How could you rethink that?

---

S8: If somebody else helped me say, "could you please rethink", I would say "okay."

---

Then I could rethink, "I could learn from others."

---

S9: You are good.

---

S10: I am good, I just needs some practice or help.

---

S11: I am good at math.

---

S12: I am very good at math.

---

S13: I will practice at math.

---

S14: I am trying my best at math.

---

S15: (pause 6 s) I (pause 6 s) I know, but I do know what to do in science but I'll practice what to do in math.

---

S16: I can do math.

---

S17: I will be patient. I will wait till I get better at math. I'll practice.

---

S18: Practice makes you better.

---

S19: I'm goin' get better and better at math.

---

## Appendix I

### Question 8 (Part Two) – Rethinking Statements

*Rethink: “I can’t draw very well.”*

Student	Hurtful	Helpful	Helpful
S1	can’t	(pause 7 s) I am practicing.	I am practicing.
S2	can’t	I can draw very well.	can
S3	well (pause 6 s) very	(pause 7 s) I am gonna to be better at it.	at it, be
S4	can’t	I can draw.	can
S5	very, can’t	The more I practice, the better I get.	(pause 5 s) practice, better
S6	can’t	I can draw very well.	I can
S7	can’t	I can draw very well.	can
S8	can’t	I can learn from others how to draw.	can, to
S9	don’t	You can draw very well.	well
S10	can’t	I can draw really well. I just need some practice with my teacher.	Draw, very well. The well is so good.
S11	can’t	I can draw very well.	can
S12	can’t	I can draw.	can
S13	can’t	I will draw really well.	(pause 6 s) really
S14	can’t	I can draw.	can
S15	(pause 5 s) can’t	I will learn how to draw.	learn
S16	can’t	I can draw.	can
S17	(pause 7 s) I can’t	(pause 6 s) I can learn from others.	I can
S18	can’t	I can draw very well.	can
S19	can’t	I’ll get better at drawing.	better
Total	17	19	17

**Rethink: “I’ll try to clean up.”**

Student	Hurtful	Rethink	Helpful
S1	try	(pause 13 s) I can do it.	can
S2	try	I will clean my table.	I will
S3	(pause 11 s) clean	(pause 6 s) I can clean up with my friends.	can
S4	try	I’ll clean my table.	(pause 10 s) I (pause 9 s) will
S5	(pause 5 s) I’ll try	I will clean my table.	I will
S6	try	I will clean up my table.	I will
S7	try	I will clean up my table.	will
S8	try	(pause 11 s) I can clean my table.	can
S9	table	(pause 28 s) I don’t know.	(was not asked-sensed confusion)
S10	try	I want to clean up my table.	want
S11	try	I will try to clean up my table. ( <i>Second Attempt</i> ) I will clean up my table.	will
S12	try	I will clean up.	(pause 14 s) will
S13	try	I will clean up my table.	(pause 5 s) will
S14	none	(pause 11 s) I am trying to clean up my table	(pause 5 s) trying
S15	(pause 10 s) try	I am . . . I can clean up my table.	can
S16	try	I will clean my table.	I will
S17	I’ll try	I will do a good job on my table.	Do a good job.
S18	try	(pause 8 s) I will clean my table.	will
S19	try	I will clean my table.	will
Total	16	17	17

**Rethink: “I don’t know how to read.”**

Student	Hurtful	Rethink	Helpful
S1	don’t	(pause 9 s) I am practicing or I need help with reading.	help, practice
S2	don’t	I can read.	can
S3	(pause 5 s) don’t	I would get better at reading.	better
S4	don’t	I know how to read.	I
S5	don’t, know	I can do it.	can and do
S6	I don’t	I can read.	I can
S7	don’t	I do know how to read.	do
S8	don’t	I can learn from others to read.	can, to
S9	don’t	S: You know how to read. T: Use “I.” S: I can read.	read
S10	know	I just need some practice reading.	just, need, some, practice.
S11	don’t	(pause 6 s) I know how to read.	(pause 7 s) how
S12	don’t	I know how to read.	(pause 11 s) how
S13	don’t	I will practice to read.	practice
S14	don’t	I can read.	can
S15	don’t	I will learn how to read.	will, learn
S16	don’t	I am good at reading.	good
S17	I don’t	(pause 6 s) I can read.	I can
S18	don’t	I am practicing how to read.	I am
S19	don’t	I’ll get better at reading.	better
Total	18	19	15

**Rethink: “I’ll never get to sharpen the pencils.”**

Student	Hurtful	Rethink	Helpful
S1	never	I am patient. I can wait.	I am patient.
S2	never	I am patient. I can wait. Next time I will get a turn.	can, wait
S3	never	I will get a turn another day.	a
S4	never	I will get a turn to sharpen the pencil.	(pause 13 s) I will
S5	never	Sometime I will. My turn will come.	(pause 6 s) My turn will come.
S6	never	I am patient and I can wait.	patient and can
S7	never	I do get to sharpen the pencils.	do
S8	never	Could I please sharpen the pencils?	(pause 11 s) I, please
S9	never	I can sharp the pencils ( <i>prompting needed</i> )	can
S10	never	I will get to sharpen the pencils one day.	will

Student	Hurtful	Rethink	Helpful
S11	never	I am patient. I can wait and I will sharpen my pencil.	patient, (pause 8 s) and (pause 5 s) can, wait
S12	never	I get to sharpen the pencil.	get
S13	never	One day I will get to sharpen the pencils.	(pause 11 s ) will
S14	never	I would like a turn sharpening the pencils.	like
S15	never	I am patient. I can wait.	patient, wait
S16	never	I will get a turn to sharpen the pencils.	I will
S17	never	Maybe next time I'll get a turn.	(pause 6 s) I will
S18	never	I am patient. I can wait.	patient
S19	never	I'll sometimes get to sharpen the pencils.	sometimes
Total	19	19	17

***Rethink: "I am not good at writing."***

Student	Hurtful	Rethink	Helpful
S1	not	(pause 11 s) I need help with writing.	help
S2	not	I can write very well.	very, well, can
S3	not	I will be the best.	best
S4	not	I am good at writing.	good
S5	not	Sometimes I will get better. I just have to keep on practicing.	keep on
S6	not	I am good at drawing.	good
S7	not	(pause 6 s) I am good at writing.	good
S8	not	(pause 41 s) I can learn to write.	can and to
S9	not	I know how to write.	how
S10	not	I am good at writing. I just need some help.	good
S11	not	I am good at writing.	good
S12	not	I am good at writing.	good
S13	(pause 5 s) not	I am good at writing.	good
S14	not	I am good at writing.	good
S15	not	I will practice how to write.	practice
S16	not	I am good at writing.	good
S17	not	I am good at writing.	I am
S18	not	The more I practice, the better I get.	(pause 7 s) practice
S19	not	I'll get better at writing.	better
Total	19	19	18

## Appendix J

### Question 9 – Do you catch yourself changing hurtful words to helpful words?

---

S1: *Nods head yes.*

T: How do you do it?

S1: I take my time to think and when I think a lot of helpful words to say and I do then I say it.

---

S2: *Nods head yes.*

T: Yes? How do you do it?

S2: If I say, “Don’t touch that,” I rethink it, “Please touch something else that has germs on it.”

T: So do you use it a lot or sometimes?

S2: A lot.

---

S3: (pause 7 s)

T: Do you ever catch yourself changing a hurtful word or red word to a green word?

S3: One day I said a red word, then I rethink it and say it to a green word.

---

S4: (pause 8 s). The hurtful words are (pause 4 s).

T: Like, do you ever say a hurtful word and think, “Oh I said a hurtful word” and change it to a helpful word?

S4: If you say a hurtful word and then you rethink it to a helpful word, the other person will kind of be happy.

T: So how do you rethink or how do you change it?

S4: Like if I said, “I don’t know,” the other person says, “You will know if you go there.”

---

S5: Sometimes, not really.

T: No you don’t catch yourself.

S5: No.

T: If you could catch yourself how would you do it?

S5: I would do it like this, I will say, “Don’t do that. Oh wait a minute, I have to rethink” and then I would rethink it by saying, “Can you keep your hands to yourself and keep your hands by your side so if you touch that it might break.”

T: What would help you to remember and catch yourself to rethink?

S5: It would be, I could like stop and say, “Wait a minute I need to rethink that one” without people asking me.

---

S6: Yes.

T: How do you do it?

S6: Sometime you can hear, sometime your brain wants to say it out but then you have to tell your brain that your it, you have to change it.

T: So you tell your brain you have to change it?

S6: Yeah.

T: And then what happens?

S6: And then we try to make kind words and helpful words.

---

---

S7: I think that is a yes or no.

T: Okay

S7: I can't decide.

T: If it is a yes, how do you do it?

S7: I am still thinking (pause 16 s).

T: Okay, If it is a yes how do you do it?

S7: I think I do it by saying helpful words.

---

S8: (pause 7 s).

T: Do you ever find you say, "Oh I said a hurtful word, I need to change it to a helpful word?"

S8: *Nods head yes.*

T: Yeah, how do you do that?

S8: Sometimes I say a hurtful word then I say in my head, a word so I can rethink.

T: What do you rethink it to?

S8: When I say, "Don't touch that." I rethink it to, "Can you please keep your hands to yourself."

---

S9: *Shakes head yes.*

T: How? How do you do it?

S9: Rethink.

T: You rethink. So what do you do in your brain?

S9: I think in my brain.

T: What do you say in your brain?

S9: Helpful words.

---

S10: No, maybe, ahh yeah.

T: Do you ever catch yourself?

S10: Sometimes.

T: How do you do that sometimes?

S10: Like when I say a bad word, I catch myself sometimes.

T: Then what do you do?

S10: I rethink and say "Sorry" to them

T: What are some words that you say that are hurtful to your brain?

S10: "I am dumb."

T: How do you rethink that?

S10: Rethink and "I am smart."

---

S11: Yeah.

T: How do you do it?

S11: Rethink. My brain rethinks and go.

---

S12: *Nods head yes.*

T: How?

S12: You are nice.

T: Is that what you say?

S12: *Nods head yes.*

T: What is the hurtful word your brain says before that? (pause 6 s) you are bad.

T: then what do you do?

S12: I rethink and said the helpful word.

---

---

S13: Yeah

T: How do you do it?

S13: If I say a bad word, I stop rethink and go

---

S14: Sometimes.

T: How do you do it?

S14: Like when I say a red word, I go to the chart, and I just look at the red word that I said and then I switch it out with a green word.

T: How do you catch yourself?

S14: When someone reminds me.

---

S15: Yes.

T: How do you do it?

S: In my house whenever I say, "I can do it mom" and then I say, then "I don't like," then I rethink "I don't want to read anything" but I do and I think, "I do want to get better." So then I read.

T: So you rethink that?

S15: Yes.

---

S16: "I will not get a turn," and then I will rethink like, "My turn will come. I can do it."

T: Are those things you say to yourself?

S16: Yes.

---

S17: Yes. My mom tells me to actually catch them at home sometimes.

T: Does she? How do you catch them?

S17: I actually catch them when I actually say something in my mind and I actually start saying it and then I stop myself and I rethink it.

T: You rethink it?

S17: *Nods head yes.*

T: What color is rethink?

S17: Green, red, yellow.

T: There you go.

S17: Ahhhh.

---

S18: Yes.

T: How? How do you do it?

S18: At snack time I said "Don't" to (student), then I said, "don't do that." And then I rethink and then said, "Please can you not say that."

---

S19: Yes.

T: How do you do it?

S19: I know by looking at the person's face.

T: How else do you catch hurtful words? You see your friends face, what else do you do to catch hurtful words to helpful words?

S19: I try to rethink, I try to remember what did I say, and then I remember I said a red word.

T: What do you change it to?

S19: I change it to a nice word

---

## Appendix K

### Question 10 – Do you think it is important learn self-talk?

---

S1: *Nod head yes.*

T: Why?

S1: Because you learn all the helpful words and all the hurtful words and you won't say them.

T: You won't say what?

S1: All the hurtful stuff.

---

S2: Yes

T: Why?

S2: Because then you know what to say to myself when I feel angry.

---

S3: *Nods head yes*

T: Why?

S3: Because then you learn about helpful words.

---

S4: Yeah.

T: Why do you think it is important to learn self-talk?

S4: Because you have to rethink those bad words and hurtful words and you have to change them to helpful words.

---

S5: Yes because if you don't learn self-talk you might have to say hurtful words a lot but if you know self-talk you could say green words a lot sometimes.

---

S6: Yes.

T: Why?

S6: It is important because that way if you get in grade two they might ask you those questions.

T: Why else do you think it is important to learn self-talk?

S6: Because if you say it to somebody and it will hurt their feelings.

T: What will hurt their feelings?

S6: If you say the red word.

T: So then what do you do?

S6: You re . . . stop rethink and go.

T: And then how does that help?

S6: It helps your brain be better, like saying green words and helpful words

---

S7: Yes.

T: Why?

S7: So, people don't get mad or sad. Hey, mad and sad both have ad. Yeah, Ad is a-d-d.

---

S8: Yes.

T: Why do you think it is important?

S8: So you could learn.

T: What do you learn from it?

S8: You learn what are kind words and what are red words.

---

---

S9: Um huh.

T: Why do you think it is important to learn that?

S9: Because we can learn.

T: If we learn it how does it help us?

S9: To talk.

T: To talk how?

S9: Nice words.

---

S10: Yeah because if you don't learn self-talk you can't learn how to talk to yourself in your brain.

T: What do you think is important to learn for your brain?

S10: Learning new stuff and to learn that self-talk is important to your brain.

---

S11: Yeah.

T: Why?

S11: Because (pause 18 s). Okay what was that?

T: Do you think it is important to learn self-talk?

S11: Okay because when you say hurtful words you don't know what is self-talk.

---

S12: No.

T: Why? (pause 15 s).

S12: Because everyone don't know how to do it.

T: Do you think they should learn it or shouldn't learn it? What do you think?

S12: To learn it.

T: Why do you think they should learn it?

S12: (pause 6 s).

T: Why does it help other children to learn self-talk?

S12: (pause 20 s).

T: Do you know?

S12: *Shakes head no*

---

S13: Yeah

T: Why do you think it is important to learn self-talk?

S13: Cause if you say a bad word you need to rethink it, and if you learn self-talk you when you say a bad word, now you can rethink it.

---

S14: Yeah it is very, very good important. Because if you always think hurtful thoughts, you might get meaner every time you think about one.

T: So what do you think would happen if you learned more helpful words or green words?

S14: You would get really nice and you would treat other children like they are your best friend.

T: How has self-talk helped you?

S14: Because sometimes I think red words in my mind and self-talk um makes all the red words go away.

T: What do they turn into? Green words.

---

---

S15: Yes

T: Why do you think it is important to learn self-talk?

S15: So you can know everything, like your friends and your moms and dads.

T: And what do you think you learned from self-talk?

S15: Self-talk means you say something in your brain, and you talk to your brain, and your brain talks to you and you talk to your brain.

T: Why do you think it is important to learn how talk to your brain?

S15: Then we know how to talk in our brains.

---

S16: Yes because we will learn new words and use kind words.

T: What new words did you learn from self-talk?

S16: I learn "My turn will come and I can do it."

---

S17: Yeah sometimes.

T: Why do you think it is helpful or important to learn about self-talk and hurtful and helpful words?

S17: Because actually self-talk is how you talk to your brain, and or else you couldn't talk to your brain and that wouldn't be okay. You wouldn't be able to catch yourself when you are saying words.

---

S18: Yeah

T: Why?

S18: Because if you say don't or a red word, if it makes people feel sad inside, they can say it and they can rethink it.

T: And then after you rethink it what happens?

S18: They feel happy inside and they get energetic.

---

S19: Yeah.

T: Why do you think it is important to learn self-talk?

S19: You can say nice words to your brain instead of bad words like red words to your brain.

---

## Appendix L

### Question 11 – How has self-talk helped you?

---

S1: (pause 12 s). They also know how to help me rethink it.

T: Rethink what?

S1: Like if you say hurtful word then you learn self-talk you also know how to rethink

S2: By teaching helpful words into helpful words.

T: Or teaching what words.

S2: Hurtful words into helpful words.

S3: Because it helps you because you can learn and keep learning about it. Then it makes you grow.

S4: Because (pause 6 s) It will . . . you can . . . What did you say again?

T: How has self-talk helped you?

S4: I can rethink into good words.

S5: Self-talk has helped me by like rethinking and saying green words instead of saying red words because I really get, a person really gets a hang of it after they say a lot of red words.

T: What do we want to get the hang of?

S5: Saying green words.

S6: They help me write and in my brain I say, "I can't do it" but I was trying to say, "I can do it." But when you gave me hard thing, I know how to ask my mom.

T: You have to ask your mom? And that is okay because then you are looking for help.

S6: Yeah.

T: So you do it when you are writing? Is that what you said?

S6: Yeah, if I don't know a word like in reading, I can because you interview me and I need to figure out and sound it out and have strategies and so I need to try and use those.

S7: A lot. When I think of bad words in my head, I just stop, rethink, go.

S8: It help me on red words and green words.

S9: Yeah.

T: You do? How do you do that? How has changing those words helped you? So when you change it how does it make you feel or does it help you?

S9: To learn

T: To learn? And what are you learning?

S9: (pause 7 s)

T: What are you learning?

S9: I don't know

T: How is it helping you to learn nice words? (6 s pause)

T: How has learning helpful words helped you? Or learning green words, how has that helped you?

S9: My friends help me.

T: Your friends help you? And how does that make you feel?

S9: Happy

S10: When you do a bad word, you think in your brain and say, "Brain I just want to say sorry for making a bad word up and I know that you had a hard time."

---

---

S11: (pause 20 s) Because (7 s). Because we learned self talk.

T: So how that it help you?

S11: It help you with hurtful words and helpful words.

---

S12: (pause 17 s).

T: How has learning hurtful words and helpful words, helped you? (pause 7 s)

S12: I don't know.

---

S13: Good

T: It has been good? How come it is good?

S13: Cause if I say a bad word, my brain says rethink it.

---

S14: Because sometimes I think red words in my mind and self-talk um makes all the red words go away.

T: What do they turn into? Green words.

---

S15: Helped me, you . . . I do, sometimes I don't want to read, right and then my brain says "read" so then I read.

---

S16: It helped me because of kind words and something like kind words and how green words.

---

S17: Well it actually helped me actually at home so that I can actually catch myself when I actually say some bad words in my mind.

T: So then what do you say after the bad words?

S17: I actually say a better word to say instead of the bad word.

---

S18: Good.

T: How?

S18: Because, what was the question again?

T: How has self-talk helped you? So has it helped learning hurtful and helpful words?

Has it helped your brain?

S18: Yes

T: How?

S18: (Student name) said a hurtful word, and I told her to rethink and I felt sad inside.

Then she said sorry and she rethink and I felt happy and energetic.

T: So do you feel like you know how to change hurtful words to helpful word?

S18: Yes

---

S19: It helped me by saying good words to my brain.

T: Anything else?

S19: *Shakes head no.*

---