

**THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS OF EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SKILLS WHEN
WORKING WITH STUDENTS WITH HIGH FUNCTIONING AUTISM IN
KINDERGARTEN THROUGH SECOND GRADE AT A RURAL MIDWESTERN
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

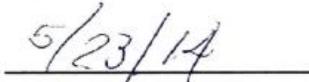
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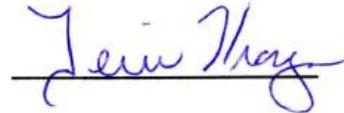
**A Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for a
Masters of Science in Education
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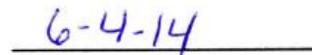
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Abstract

The research was designed to investigate the perceptions of regular education teachers in a rural midwestern school when working with students with high functioning autism while using social stories during a six week intervention.

The research questions investigated during the study were:

1. What do teachers perceive are the effects social stories have on students' behavior when working with students with high functioning autism in kindergarten through second grade at a rural midwestern elementary school?
2. What do teachers perceive are the effects social stories have on students' behavior when read independently by students with high functioning autism who attend a rural midwestern elementary school?

The study researched during the six week intervention involving five regular education teachers from a rural midwestern school was how teacher's perceptions would or would not change towards social stories. Two of the teacher involved taught kindergarten, one taught first grade, and the last two teachers taught second grade. The teachers were asked to participate in the study based solely on having a student in their classroom with high functioning autism. The six week intervention involved students independently reading social stories that targeted a specific behavior. The teachers were asked to complete three different types of surveys prior to and after the six week intervention.

The five teachers perceptions improved towards the impact social stories have when read independently by students with high functioning autism over a six week intervention.

Chapter One

Many elementary students struggle with changes to their daily schedule. Now imagine a child who has been diagnosed with high functioning autism. A child with high functioning autism struggles daily with routines, changes to routine, and at times can struggle with recognizing others feelings. Is there a tool students with high functioning autism can use to ease the process of changes and other difficulties they might face?

One possible tool is the use of social stories. Social stories are often used when students with high functioning autism have difficulty displaying appropriate behaviors in a specific setting, however it is unknown the effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism at a rural midwestern elementary school.

While many of the research studies provide a base line of the effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism in self-contained and resource rooms in other areas of the United States, this study will investigate teacher perceptions of the effects of social stories when working with students with high functioning autism at a rural midwestern elementary school.

Statement of the Problem

The effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism in kindergarten through second grade are unknown at a rural midwestern elementary school. Research provides valid examples of the effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism in inclusion settings but there is a gap in the research stating the effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism. It is

unknown how teachers working with students in kindergarten through second grade perceive the effects of social stories at a rural midwestern elementary school.

Purpose of the Study

The study will investigate the effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism at the elementary school. The research studies examined in Chapter Two show a gap in the research and it is unknown the effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism at the elementary school. This study will provide examples of how social stories, when read independently can affect behavior of students with high functioning autism. The study will examine data collected through school staff at the elementary school and the perceptions teachers have of the effects of students reading social stories independently with high functioning autism at the elementary school.

Research Questions

The research questions are the following:

3. What do teachers perceive are the effects social stories have on students' behavior when working with students with high functioning autism in kindergarten through second grade at a rural midwestern elementary school?
4. What do teachers perceive are the effects social stories have on students' behavior when read independently by students with high functioning autism who attend a rural midwestern elementary school?

Nature of Study

The study will be a qualitative study because it will occur in a natural setting, the school district and more specifically the setting where the students display disruptive behaviors. The qualitative research will be a case study because the focus is to examine the teacher perceptions of the effects social stories have when working with five students with high functioning autism in their natural setting at a rural midwestern elementary school. The methods to collect data will be used in the form of interviews and questionnaires (Leedy, 2013).

Five classroom teachers will participate in a survey utilizing a Likert-type scale. The surveys utilized in the study will be used to gather data to support the problem statement, showing the effects social stories have when working with kindergarten through second grade students with high functioning autism at a rural midwestern elementary school. According to Leedy, validity of a qualitative research can be determined by the feedback of others. The Likert-type scale will use the rating of one to five, with one being strongly disagree and five being strong agree.

A personal interview will occur with the five teachers and the investigator. The questions will be targeted on the perceptions of the effects the teachers witnessed while the student utilized the social stories and based upon the findings of within the Literature Review.

Significance of the Study

The study performed at a rural midwestern elementary school will add to a small pool of research focusing on the perceptions of teachers and the effects of social stories when utilized with students with high functioning autism. The research will show educators if utilizing social stories is a good method to use when working with students with high functioning autism. It will provide samples and baselines of when social stories are read independently by students with

high functioning autism in kindergarten through second grade and what the effects look like in a school setting with minimal special education support.

Definition of Terms

Social Stories- a short story written in the child perspective and one that mainly delivers how to behave appropriately in social experiences (Crozier and Tincani, 2005).

High Functioning Autism- High-functioning autism (HFA) is a term applied to people with autism who are deemed to be cognitively "higher functioning" (IQ>70) than other people with autism. Individuals with high functioning autism exhibit deficits in areas of communication, emotion recognition and expression, and social interaction.

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

It could be assumed the teachers participating in both the survey and interview may be honest when participating. It may also be assumed they may take their time when completing the survey. It could be assumed that social stories are an effective social behavioral tool for young children with high functioning autism

The first limitation is the reliability and validity of the questionnaires and personal interview used to collect data. The investigator created both tools based on interest and the findings within the literature review. Another limitation is that the investigator is creating the social stories and collecting all the data with no inner rater reliability checks. A delimitation is noted in the selection of where the study will take place. Also, the participants being selected to take part in the study includes a population of convenience.

Conclusion

The effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism are discussed numerous times in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 examines other research studies completed and the effects social stories have had when working with students with high functioning autism.

Chapter 3 provides a layout of the method to be performed to examine the effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism in kindergarten through second grade at a rural midwestern elementary school.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Social stories are utilized to help students who have difficulty dealing with social experiences learn new strategies and techniques so the child can respond appropriately. Many times social stories are used with students with High functioning autism. Social stories are beneficial when working with students with high functioning autism because, “children with high functioning autism often rigidly adhere to routines, the social story may serve to establish a routine or a rule that the child may then apply to the social situation” (Scattone, Wilczynski, Edwards, & Rabian, 2002, pg. 535).

The effects social stories have when working with kindergarten through second grade students with high functioning autism at A rural midwestern elementary school is unknown. The following literature review provides definitions of social stories, goals of social stories, components of a social story, positive effects, and lastly the limitations of social stories. All are vital when trying to understand the effects social stories have when working with students on the high functioning autism spectrum. To truly understand the effects of social stories one must comprehend the definitions, goals, and components of a social story. The research articles provided in the literature review provide valid examples of the effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism.

Definition of Social Stories

A social story is a “short story that describes the salient aspects of a specific social situation that a child may find challenging” (Delano & Snell, 2006). Social stories can also be defined as a short story written in the child perspective and one that mainly delivers how to behave appropriately in social experiences (Crozier & Tincani, 2005).

Social stories are mainly utilized with children with high functioning autism to teach an appropriate behavior. Each educator has a different expectation of what appropriate means but for the most part an appropriate behavior is when a child is following directions and keeping themselves, and others safe. Some professionals utilize social stories to teach new or confusing social experiences. At times social stories will include words and sentences with the child and others involved with the child's day. Other social stories include not only words but also include visuals, either clip art or real life pictures of the child or their daily surroundings (Graetz, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2009).

Social stories will often include social experiences. As stated previously the social experiences can be new or old but are often developed because the child is having difficulty in a social setting. Some social experiences include, but are not limited to, taking turns, talking out, waiting in line, keeping hands to self, and being kind to others. Educators developing social stories will often include social settings the child attends on daily basis in the school setting. Social settings can include regular education classroom, special education classroom, bathroom, cafeteria, playground, etc. (Sansosti & Smith, 2006).

Goals of Social Stories

A social story has different goals and purposes. Some educators utilize social stories to teach children new social experiences. Social stories can also be used to teach appropriate ways to respond or act in challenging social experience. To ensure success educators must have the goals and purposes in perspective. The effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism can be negative or positive. It is vital to use the social stories properly so the educator receives positive results.

According to Ozdemir there are six different purposes of developing a social story. Social stories can be used to provide details about routines whether it is to change an existing routine or introduce a new one. Social stories can also be utilized to teach new situations in a child friendly way. At times teaching academic skills, appropriate behavior skills, or other new skills can be taught with social stories. The most common goal of social stories is to teach students a replacement behavior for challenging behaviors (Ozdemir, 2008).

Social stories are beneficial for several reasons. Many times social stories use pictures to describe a lesson so students whom learn better visually strive with social stories. Next, social stories do not stand out, meaning they can appear as a book so students who utilized them will not stand out from their peers. Students on the High functioning autism spectrum strive with social stories because the lessons provided are real and often connected directly to the child's life. Parents and teachers find social stories beneficial because children can use them independently. Social stories have been found highly effective in the education setting (Crozier & Tincani, 2005).

Components of Social Stories

There are key components to developing a social story. A social story requires specific types of sentences. There are four types of sentences a social story should include: descriptive, directive, perspective and affirmative or control. These are the four types of sentences necessary to write an effective social story (Delano & Snell, 2006).

Descriptive sentences include who, what, when, and where in the social story. Directive sentences provide details on what is expected of the student. Perspective sentences are the feelings others may be feeling when the child does an appropriate behavior or when the child

displays an inappropriate behavior. Affirmative or control sentences are used to help children define or remember the story better. “The ratio of 2-5 descriptive, perspective, and or control sentences for every 0-1 directive sentence is the best way to develop a social story” (Ozdemir, 2008, pg1689).

Some professionals state it is important to write social stories at the child’s reading level. The importance of having social stories written at the child’s comprehension level and to have the print appropriate for the child is vital when wanting social stories to be effective when working with students (Ozdemir, 2008).

Another key component of social stories is the delivery. The most common delivery for social stories is having the teacher read the social story to the child. The goal is for the child to read the social story independently. As stated by Karkhaneh et. al., (2010) there are other possible ways to deliver a social story to a child. As Karkhaneh et. al., stated the way a social story is presented to the child is critical. If the social story is presented to the child in a friendly, exciting way they child may be more receptive in listening or reading the story. In order to determine if a social story is effective the child must utilize the social story correctly.

It is also beneficial to monitor the child’s progress once the social story is in place. “Students reading the story independently, putting the story on a cassette tape for nonreaders, and creating a videotaped social story for those who are independent or need assistance are all ways to deliver a social story to a child” (Karkhaneh, Clark, & Hartling, 2010,pg642).

Teachers reading the social stories assess students by asking comprehension questions. It provides a clear understanding for the teacher if the student understands what is being read by

the adult and later will ensure the child understands what they are reading independently (Scattone, Wilczynski, Edwards, & Rabian, 2002).

Positive Effects of Social Stories

All of the research studies state the positive outcomes of utilizing social stories on a daily basis for students with high functioning autism. Positive effects have included “improving positive social behaviors, decreasing challenging behaviors, increasing hand washing and on task behavior, greeting people appropriately and sharing toys, increasing the frequency of social communication behaviors, and increasing appropriate play” (Ozdemir, 2008). The participants who participated in the studies were able to be in their regular education classrooms for longer periods of time and at times even showed an increase of peer interaction.

Delano and Snell found all three of their participants, aged kindergarten and second graders, showed an increase in the duration of time they spent socially engaged with peers during the intervention time. The participants utilized the social story for a specific duration of time, determined by the special education teachers. It was also found the social story intervention decreased challenging behaviors and increased positive behaviors (Delano and Snell, 2006).

Karkhaneh et. al., (2010), reviewed research studies provided by other professionals to examine the effects social stories have when working with students on the high functioning autism spectrum. When investigating a study the results showed a significant increase of positive effects when working with boys on the high functioning autism spectrum. During and after the time of utilizing a social story the targeted behaviors of game playing, greeting another, and asking peers to join in and play a game increased with the boys.

Limitations

The research shows many positive effects and benefits for using social stories when working with student with high functioning autism. The research studies lack negative effects of social stories however; there were certain limitations when using social stories. Some of the limitations are out of the control of the child and the child's teacher/s hands.

One limitation noted was "poor adherence to the treatment protocol" (Sansosti &Smith, 2006). The researchers also noted a limitation in not knowing the consistency of the delivery. At times, when a social story was delivered the documentation was not recorded. It was also unclear if teachers, parents, or other educators did not note the times and dates of the delivery.

In the study completed by Sansosti and Smith one of the three participants did not show an increase of positive behaviors. The parents did not journal when they read the social story, who they read the social story with, and how the story made the child feel (Sansosti &Smith, 2006). The researchers connected the lack of documentation to the decrease of the effectiveness of the social stories.

Karkeneh et. al.,(2010), investigated other research studies in a particular study researchers worked with 10 children identified with high functioning autism between the ages 4-8 years. A clear limitation in the research was not having the social story read every day if not multiple times during a day. The social stories targeted a reduction of inappropriate or aggressive behaviors. The students displayed positive results but as stated above it was clear after further investigation if the social stories would have been read multiple times a day the children may have shown a higher increase of positive behaviors.

Another limitation corresponds with the positive reinforcement connected to the use of social stories. At times educators will provide reinforcements when a child displays the desired behavior targeted in the social story. Sansosti and Smith stated if there was no reinforcement provided some children would lack the motivation needed to display the targeted social skill (Sansosti & Smith, 2006).

It has been further documented that students have refused to read the social story and have even refused to listen to the adult reading the social story. In the study performed by Scattone et al., a participant refused to read the social story (2002). It was reported by the teacher the child would sit with the story on his lap for five minutes before he opened it. Even after opening the story he repeatedly asked his teacher if he could skip reading the story. The effects of the intervention were reported showing no increase or decrease in the target behaviors.

Ozdemir (2008) completed a study with three boys between the ages of 7-9 years. One boy named Pic was not able to read the social story independently. In order for Pic to hear/listen to the social story a teacher's assistant needed to be present to read the story to Pic. The second boy named Nathan could read his social story independently but lost interest after nine weeks. Another teacher's assistant was required to encourage and at times read the story to Nathan. The third boy Aaron also required a teacher's assistant to read the social story to him. The limitation of the social story was clear if there was not a teacher assistant present to read and/or encourage the three boys to read the social story the effects of the social story would be skewed. The results of the three boys were all positive and each boy increased their target social behavior so they could participate with their peers in the classroom.

The above research studies show clear positive effects and the limitations social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism. It is not clear the effects social stories have when working with young students with high functioning autism. The next chapter will provide a clear outline of the methodology and the investigation needed to show the effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism. The types of methods used to collect data involve surveys from classroom teachers and interviews gaining perceptions of the teachers view on the effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism in kindergarten through second grade at a rural midwestern elementary school.

Chapter Three

When the selected research studies in chapter 2 were investigated, it was clear there was no data showing the effects social stories had when working with young students with high functioning autism. In the previous chapters the researcher provided an explanation of the use of social stories and why, at times, educators chose to utilize the stories to teach a social skill.

The effects social stories have when working with kindergarten through second grade students with high functioning autism at a rural midwestern elementary school is investigated in the following research study. The following methodology provided a study which involved the perceptions teachers had on the effects social stories had when read independently by students with high functioning autism in their classrooms. Each teacher was asked to provide their perception of how the students behavior was affected by reading a social story designed to target the students with high functioning autism specific disruptive behavior in a particular setting.

Design

The type of design utilized for the following research study was a qualitative methodology. The study incorporated collecting data for five case studies. The data collection instruments utilized were pretest-posttest questionnaire and a personal follow up interview. The type of questionnaire used was a group administered electronic questionnaire (see appendix A). “A sample of respondents was brought together and asked to respond to a structured sequence of questions. Traditionally, questionnaires were administered in group settings for convenience” (Trochin, 2006). The participants participated in a group administered questionnaire utilizing the internet. The second type of survey used was a personal interview (see Appendix B). The

interviewer asked questions directly to the participants and if needed was able to ask follow up questions.

Five teachers were asked their perceptions of the effects social stories had when working with a student from their classroom with high functioning autism. The teachers' perception prior to beginning of the six week social story intervention was documented. At the end of the six week social story intervention the perceptions of the effects of the social stories were asked in a questionnaire format and a personal interview. The data collected provided the perceptions of the effects the social stories had when working with students with high functioning autism in kindergarten through second grade at a rural midwestern elementary school.

The methodology provided evidence of the effects social stories had when working with students with high functioning autism in kindergarten through second grade at a rural midwestern elementary school.

Participants

The sample of the research study involved five teachers whom taught kindergarten through second grade at a rural midwestern elementary school. The kindergarten teacher taught at the elementary for ten plus years and had participated in numerous high functioning autism conferences. The two, first grade teachers had been teaching at the elementary school for fifteen plus years and also attended numerous high functioning autism trainings throughout their years of teaching. Lastly, the two, second grade teachers had been teaching six years or less and had not attended high functioning autism conferences since they began teaching at the elementary school.

The classrooms at a rural midwestern elementary school had a maximum of eighteen students in their classrooms. Grades kindergarten through third grade is included in a state effort which allows for reduction of class size. The elementary school had an enrollment of 143 students.

The five students selected for the intervention were chosen because of the convenience for the investigator. The five participants selected for the intervention were all boys. Two of the five were in kindergarten, one was in first grade, and the last two were in second grade. One of the five boys was Native American and four of the five were Caucasian. The investigator was the IEP case manager and was therefore able to provide appropriate interventions to the five students.

Instrumentation

The pretest and posttest electronic questions were created by the investigator based on the literature review. The two surveys were used to determine the perceptions of the effects social stories had when working with young students with high functioning autism. The questionnaire used first was distributed by utilizing survey monkey. The teacher was provided a link prior to the first week of the intervention and the teachers were expected to complete the questionnaire within one week. The first questionnaire provided a baseline of the teacher perceptions of the student's disruptive behaviors prior to the six week intervention. The first questionnaire asked questions of the types of disruptive behaviors displayed by the student and in what specific setting. The next questionnaire was given at the end of the study. The questionnaire again was created by utilizing survey monkey. The questionnaire was used to determine the effects social stories had when working with the students in kindergarten through second grade at a rural

midwestern elementary school. The teachers were individually asked questions in regards to their perceptions of the effects of the social stories after the six week intervention.

Procedure

The researcher first began by submitting IRB approval. The IRB approval form was completed and approval was granted for the researcher to move on and sought the approval of the local school district. Once approval had been granted by the rural midwestern elementary school the research continued with seeking approval from the five teachers at the elementary school.

Prior to the beginning of the study the teachers and investigator agreed about the target behavior chosen for each child's social story. A social story was developed for each of the five boys by the special education teacher also the investigator, who had been trained in developing social stories. The social story was written at the child's reading level and depending on the age of the child the social story may have included visuals along with written words. The study consisted of a six week time span of the five identified boys with high functioning autism reading the social stories. The researcher sent electronically the first questionnaire and asked the regular education teachers to complete the questionnaire prior to the six week intervention.

Week one was the introduction of the social story both to the student and the regular education teacher. The social story was introduced in the setting the data showed a significant behavior difficulty by the data collected from the classroom teacher's questionnaire. In the first week the social story was read with the regular education teacher, special education teacher, or special education assistant. By the end of week one the students were required to read the social story to the teacher with no assistance. It was typical for students with high functioning autism

to use social stories and to have a teacher guide the first couple of session of reading the social stories. The classroom teacher, special education teacher, or special education assistant ensured the social story was user friendly and at the child's reading level.

In week two through week five the students were prompted to read the social story before their target problem setting. Each student read the social story a minimum of twice a day. The student read the social story independently.

In the final week, week six, the students continued to read their specifically designed social story independently. The regular education teachers were asked to take another questionnaire electronically consisting of questions specifically asking questions on their perceptions of the effects social stories had with the sample group during the six week intervention.

The regular education teachers were asked to sit down for a personal interview after the six week intervention was completed. The interview consisted of questions asking clarifying questions about the six week study. The researcher allowed the teachers to pick the time of the interview and the interview did not last longer than 30 minutes. The two questionnaires done electronically and the personal interview were utilized to determine the perceptions the teachers had of the effects social stories had when working with the sample group.

Analysis

The first questionnaire provided a baseline for the teacher's perceptions of the student's disruptive behavior. During the six weeks the entire population utilized the social story daily developed from the questionnaire given to the teachers prior to the six week intervention (See Appendix A). The second questionnaire was compared to the first survey so the researcher could visually see the effects social stories had during the six weeks (See Appendix B). The last piece

of data to be analyzed by the researcher was the personal interview. The researcher was able to hear the perceptions of the regular education teachers had during the six week (See Appendix C).

The data collected was shown in figures and was shared with the regular education teachers whom participated in the six week intervention. The figures were also shown in the research study. The data collected was used to show the effects social stories have when working with kindergarten through second grade boys from a rural midwestern elementary school with high functioning autism. All data collected, the names and identifying information of the students, and the names of the teachers participating in the study was kept confidential.

Chapter Four

Introduction

Two types of surveys were utilized to determine if teacher perceptions would change over a six week intervention when a student with high functioning autism in his/her classroom utilized a social story to target a specific behavior. The first type of survey used was an electronic questionnaire and second was a personal interview. The purpose of the intervention was to determine the perceptions of regular education teachers when high functioning students from a rural Midwestern elementary school utilized social stories. The questions researched were: What do teachers perceive are the effects social stories have on students' behavior when working with students with high functioning autism in kindergarten through second grade at a rural Midwestern elementary school? What do teachers perceive are the effects social stories have on students' behavior when read independently by students with high functioning autism who attend a rural Midwestern elementary school?

The six week intervention involved five regular education teachers and five boys with high functioning autism. The boys ranged in age between kindergarten and second grade. The regular education teachers also ranged in experience when working with students with high functioning autism.

The teachers were given an electronic questionnaire prior to beginning the six week social story intervention and the same electronic questionnaire at the end of the six week intervention. At the end of the six weeks the five regular education teachers were asked to sit down face to face with the researcher to complete a personal interview. The following tables show the results of the electronic questionnaire, the average improvements for each question, and

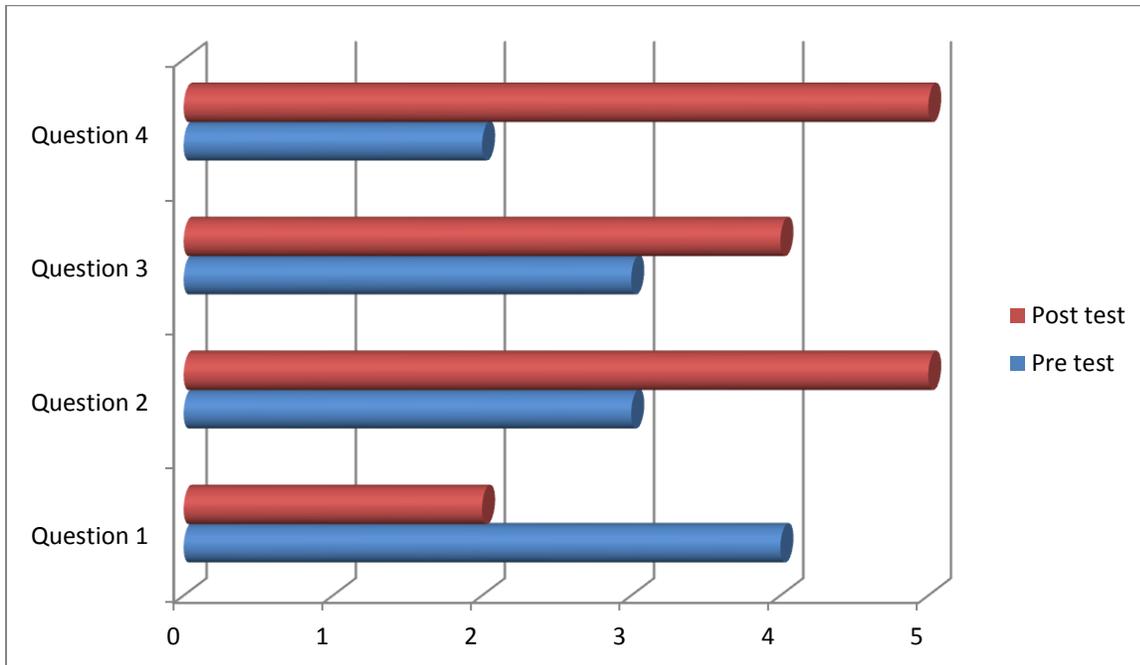
the results of the personal interview. The bars represent the pretest results and the post test results.

The four questions the teachers were asked to answer were: 1) I frequently see the student displaying the target behavior. 2) I believe the social story is an effective behavioral tool for young students with high functioning autism. 3) I believe the social story alone can change a student's behaviors. 4) At this time, the student has received five or less behavior incident reports for the target behavior. The response scale for the pretest and post test results were:

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

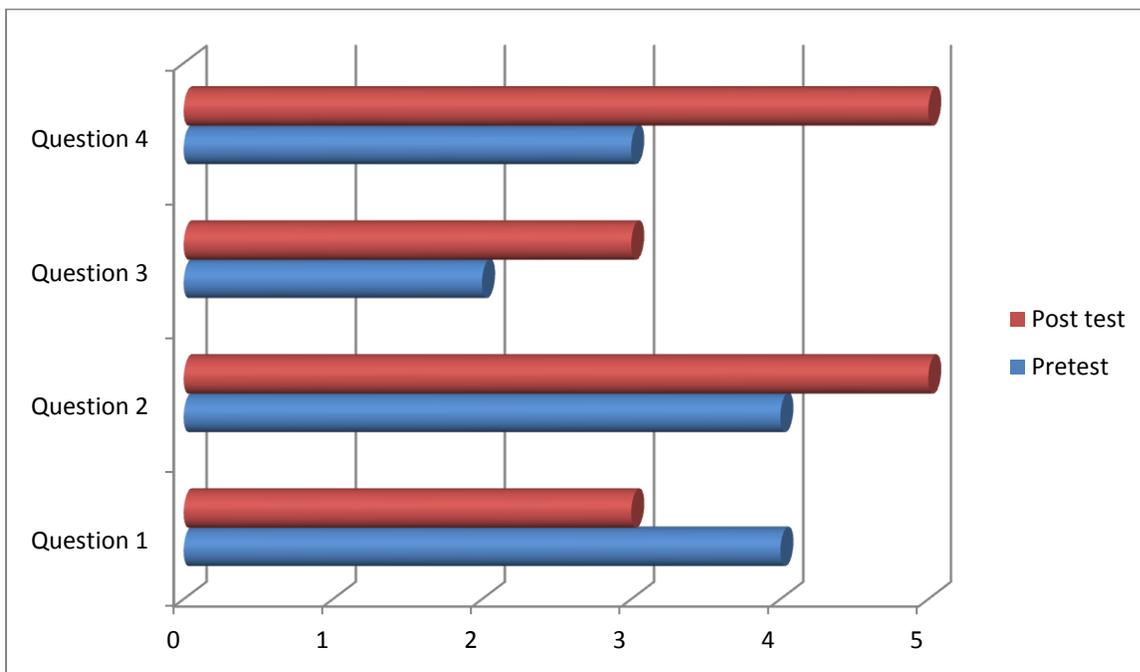
Electronic Questionnaire Results

Table 4.1 Teacher 1



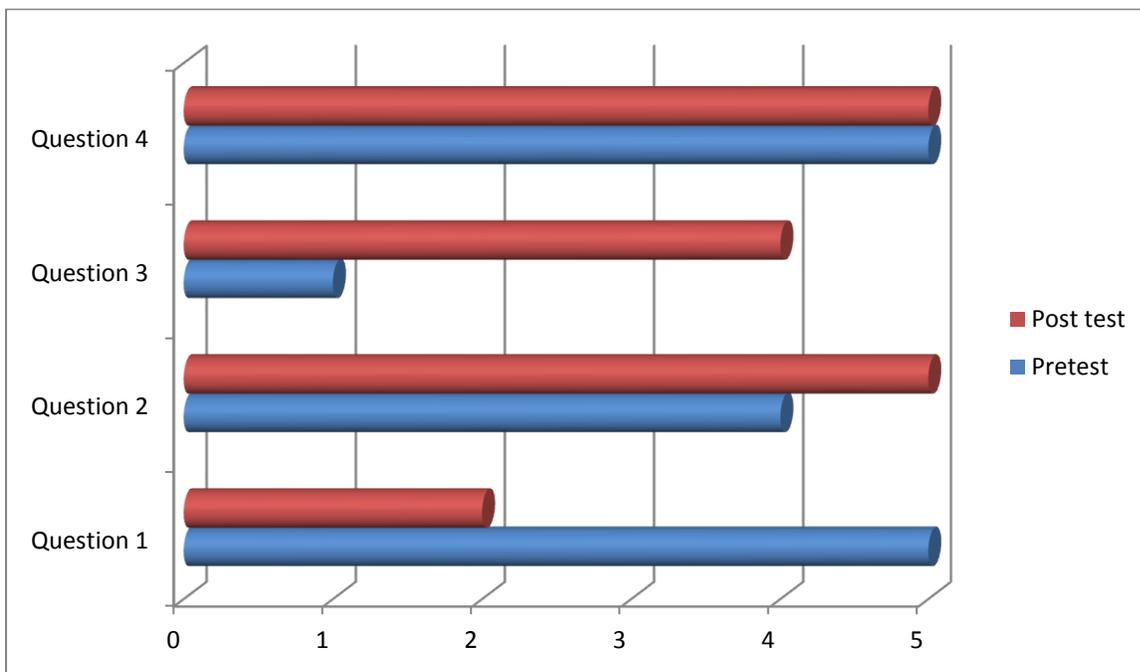
The first teacher who completed the electronic questionnaire was a kindergarten teacher. The student in her classroom was diagnosed with high functioning autism, was a male, and was in kindergarten. The student’s target behavior was using his words when upset with peers rather than being physical. Prior to the six week intervention the teacher agreed she saw the student display the target behavior and after the intervention the teacher’s perception changed to disagree. The teacher felt neutral towards a social story being an effective tool for students with high functioning autism, and at the end of the six week intervention the teacher strongly agreed. The teacher’s perception was neutral toward a social story alone being able to change a student’s behavior but after the six week intervention the teacher’s perception changed to agree. Lastly, the teacher disagreed with the student earning five or less behavior incident reports and at the end of the intervention and she strongly agreed.

Table 4.2 Teacher 2



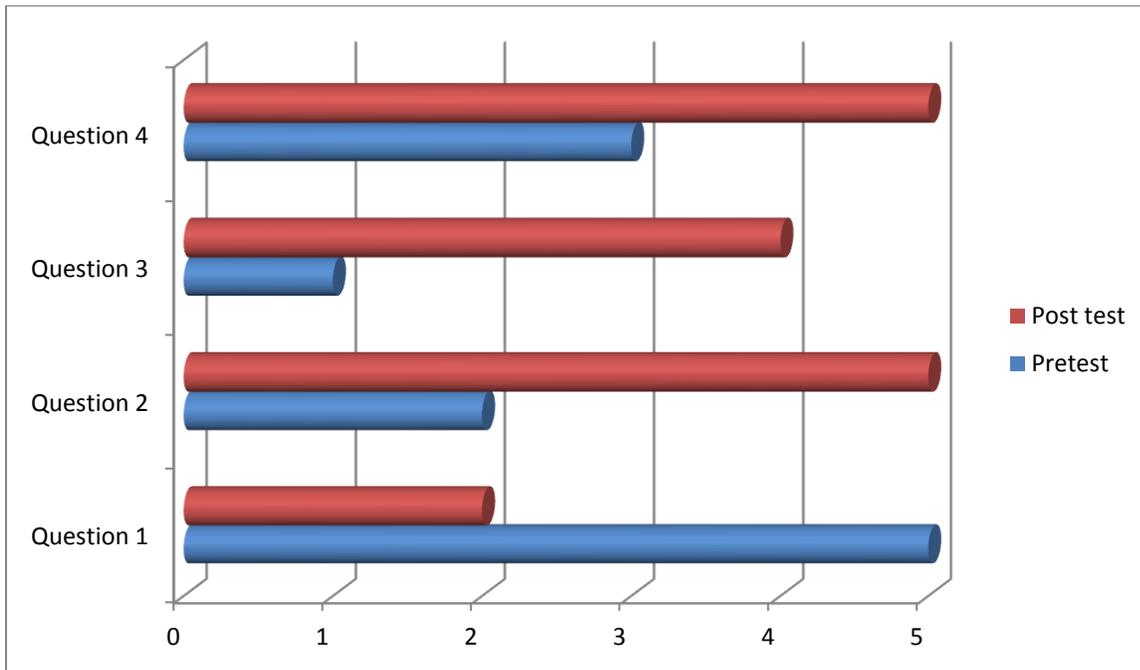
The second teacher who completed the electronic questionnaire was a kindergarten teacher. The student in her classroom was diagnosed with high functioning autism, was a male, and was in kindergarten. The student’s target behavior was to keep his hands to himself when upset. Prior to the six week intervention the teacher agreed she saw the student display the target behavior and after the intervention the teacher’s perception changed to neutral. The teacher agreed towards a social story being an effective tool for students with high functioning autism, and at the end of the six week intervention the teacher strongly agreed. The teacher disagreed towards a social story alone being able to change a student’s behavior but after the six week intervention the teacher’s perception changed to neutral. Lastly, the teacher’s perception was neutral with the student earning five or less behavior incident reports and at the end of the intervention she strongly agreed.

Table 4.3 Teacher 3



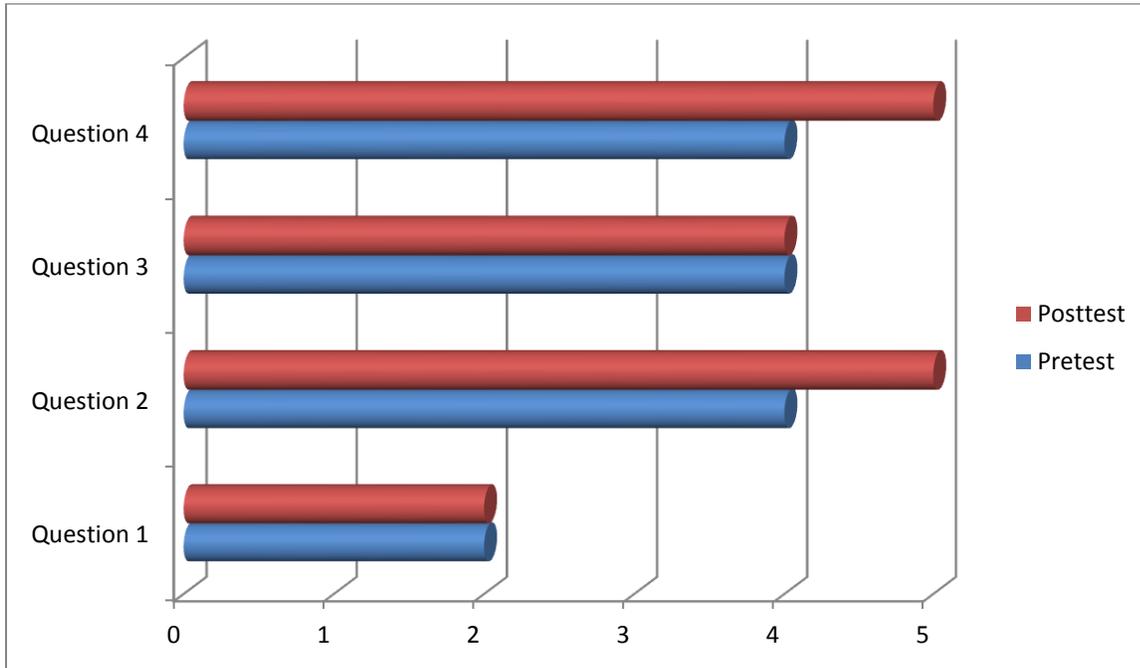
The third teacher who completed the electronic questionnaire was a first grade teacher. The student in her classroom was diagnosed with high functioning autism, was a male, and is in first grade. The student's target behavior was to find a quiet place in the regular education classroom and take a break, rather than crying when upset. Prior to the six week intervention the teacher strongly agreed she saw the student display the target behavior and after the intervention the teacher's perception changed to neutral. The teacher agreed towards a social story being an effective tool for students with high functioning autism, and at the end of the six week intervention the teacher strongly agreed. The teacher disagreed toward a social story alone being able to change a student's behavior but after the six week intervention the teacher's perception changed to strongly agreed. Lastly, the teacher strongly agreed with the student earning five or less behavior incident reports and at the end of the intervention her perception remained the same.

Table 4.4 Teacher 4



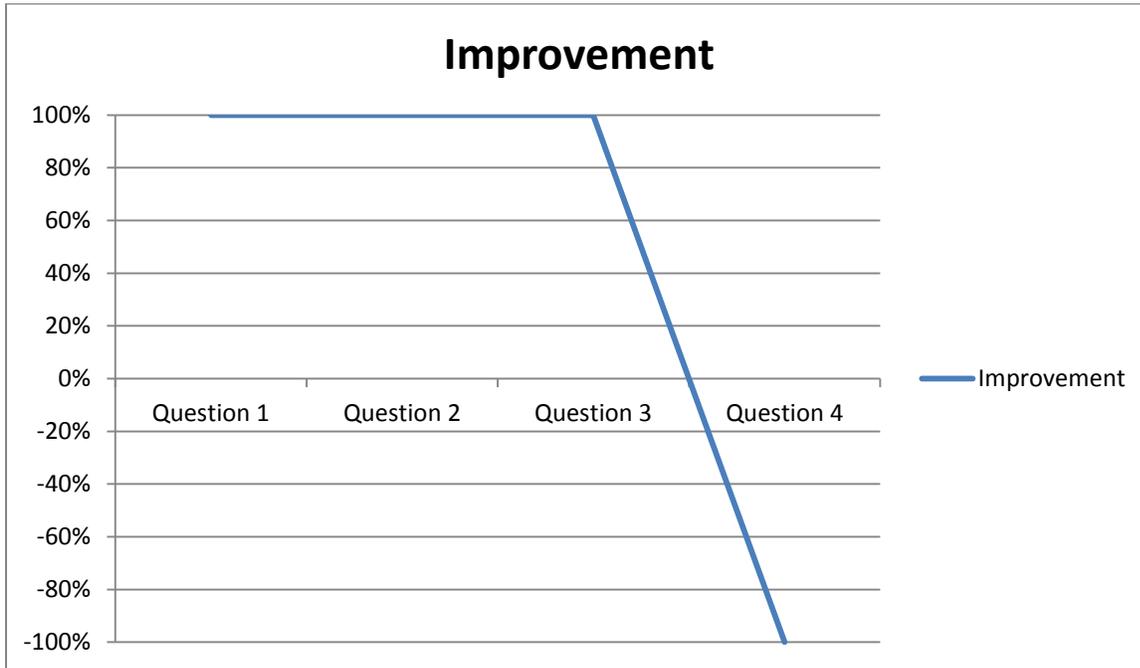
The fourth teacher who completed the electronic questionnaire was a second grade teacher. The student in her classroom was diagnosed with high functioning autism, was a male, and was in second grade. The student's target behavior was to not argue with adults when given directions. Prior to the six week intervention the teacher strongly agreed she saw the student display the target behavior and after the intervention the teacher's perception changed to disagreed. The teacher felt neutral towards a social story being an effective tool for students with high functioning autism, and at the end of the six week intervention the teacher strongly agreed. The teacher strongly disagreed that a social story alone was able to change a student's behavior but after the six week intervention the teacher's perception changed to agreed. Lastly, the teacher's perception was neutral with the student earning five or less behavior incident reports and at the end of the intervention and she agreed.

Table 4.5 Teacher 5



The fifth teacher who completed the electronic questionnaire was a second grade teacher. The student in her classroom was diagnosed with high functioning autism, was a male, and was in second grade. The student’s target behavior was to display appropriate behavior at recess. Prior to the six week intervention the teacher’s perception was neutral about the student displaying the target behavior and after the intervention the teacher’s perception remained the same. The teacher agreed towards a social story being an effective tool for students with high functioning autism, and at the end of the six week intervention the teacher strongly agreed. The teacher agreed toward a social story alone being able to change a student’s behavior and after the intervention the teacher’s perception remained the same. Lastly, the teacher agreed with the student earning five or less behavior incident reports and at the end of the intervention she strongly agreed.

Table 4.6 Average difference in points for all five teachers



The table above represents the improvements of questions one through four on the electronic questionnaire. The data shows an improvement for questions one through three. The teachers' perceptions changed showing positive responses and therefore changes in their students' behaviors. There was a 1.6 point increase in the teacher's perception on questions one through three. Question four there was a 1.8 point decrease because the teachers saw a decrease in the total number of behavior incident reports earned by the students.

Personal Interview Results

The figures below are the results of the personal interview between the researcher and the five regular education teachers. The interview took an average of fifteen minutes and the researcher sat down one on one with each teacher personally. The researcher gave a copy of the questions to the teacher and gave each teacher a chance to read through the questions

independently. After the teacher read through the questions the researcher read each question to the teacher and recorded the response to each individual question.

Figure 4.7 Teacher 1

1. Did the student read the social story daily before their target setting? Did they read the story another time as well? **Yes, the student read the social story before the target setting but I had to give a reminder to the student to read the social story. Some days I would have to ask him to read the social story again because I noticed he was on the verge of displaying the target behavior.**
2. After the six week social story intervention began did you notice a change in behaviors? If yes, please give specifics? **Not right away but I think it was the third week I noticed the student was using their words more when he was frustrated with peers in the classroom.**
3. Did the number of Behavior Incident Reports increase, decrease, or stay the same at the end of the six week intervention? **Decrease**
4. Do you feel the social story was at the appropriate cognitive level for this student? How could you tell? **Yes, I could tell because he was able to read it on his own and like I said before I noticed a change in his behavior by the third week.**
5. Do you feel this student would have done better if he/she read the social story more frequently or for longer than six weeks? If yes, why? **I don't think the frequency would help with the behaviors but I do think the student would benefit from continuing the use of reading the social story.**

Figure 4.8 Teacher 2

6. Did the student read the social story daily before their target setting? Did they read the story another time as well? **Yes, He read it daily and probably read the social story three times a day total.**
7. After the six week social story intervention began did you notice a change in behaviors? If yes, please give specifics? **Not as much as I had hoped, I noticed a slight change in behavior but I don't think the intervention time was long enough.**
8. Did the number of Behavior Incident Reports increase, decrease, or stay the same at the end of the six week intervention? **It stayed the same**
9. Do you feel the social story was at the appropriate cognitive level for this student? How could you tell? **I believe it was I could tell because the student read it independently. I think having pictures with the social story helped a lot.**

10. Do you feel this student would have done better if he/she read the social story more frequently or for longer than six weeks? If yes, why? **No, but maybe he would benefit from having the social story at the start of the year.**

Figure 4.9 Teacher 3

11. Did the student read the social story daily before their target setting? Did they read the story another time as well? **Not five times a week but I would say he read it three of the five days. He did not read it any other times during the day.**
12. After the six week social story intervention began did you notice a change in behaviors? If yes, please give specifics? **Not right away, but after a couple of weeks I noticed the student was asking if he could go to a quieter place when he was frustrated. At times, he asked to go to the special education resource room to take a break.**
13. Did the number of Behavior Incident Reports increase, decrease, or stay the same at the end of the six week intervention? **Decreased**
14. Do you feel the social story was at the appropriate cognitive level for this student? How could you tell? **Sure, I guess because he could read it independently.**
15. Do you feel this student would have done better if he/she read the social story more frequently or for longer than six weeks? If yes, why? **I do think he would have done better if he read it more frequently, but unfortunately I didn't always remember to remind him to read the social story.**

Figure 4.10 Teacher 4

16. Did the student read the social story daily before their target setting? Did they read the story another time as well? **Yes he did and no he did not.**
17. After the six week social story intervention began did you notice a change in behaviors? If yes, please give specifics? **A little, some days the student wouldn't argue with me but then there were days he would not stop arguing.**
18. Did the number of Behavior Incident Reports increase, decrease, or stay the same at the end of the six week intervention? **In the classroom it decreased but during lunch time the behavior incident reports increased.**
19. Do you feel the social story was at the appropriate cognitive level for this student? How could you tell? **Yes, because when I heard him reading the social story he was reading it correctly.**
20. Do you feel this student would have done better if he/she read the social story more frequently or for longer than six weeks? If yes, why? **Now that I look back I wish I would have had him read the social story before lunch. I think he could have benefitted from reading it.**

Figure 4.11 Teacher 5

21. Did the student read the social story daily before their target setting? Did they read the story another time as well? **Yes he did, five days a week before recess and no he didn't read it another time.**
22. After the six week social story intervention began did you notice a change in behaviors? If yes, please give specifics? **I didn't notice a change because I don't have any issues in the classroom but the assistants told me they noticed a change at recess.**
23. Did the number of Behavior Incident Reports increase, decrease, or stay the same at the end of the six week intervention? **Decrease**
24. Do you feel the social story was at the appropriate cognitive level for this student? How could you tell? **Yes, because I had him explain the social story to me. He not only would read it daily before recess but the first two weeks I asked him questions about the social story. He seemed to comprehend what he was reading.**
25. Do you feel this student would have done better if he/she read the social story more frequently or for longer than six weeks? If yes, why? **No, I think the six week intervention and the frequency of reading the social story was just the right amount of time.**

Chapter Five

Introduction

Overall, the results from the six week intervention from all five case studies were positive. The regular education teachers completed the surveys and interviews and the data showed the perceptions of the teachers changed in a positive way. The research questions were: What do teachers perceive are the effects social stories have on students' behavior when working with students with high functioning autism in kindergarten through second grade at a rural Midwestern elementary school? What do teachers perceive are the effects social stories have on students' behavior when read independently by students with high functioning autism who attend a rural Midwestern elementary school? The answer to these questions is presented in Chapter 4, and discussed below.

Findings

The first teacher's perceptions changed over the six week intervention in a positive way. The kindergarten teacher saw a change in the student's target behavior while utilizing the social story. The teacher noted she had to remind the student to read the social story during the day, but also saw a difference when the child did read the social story independently. She stated he was able to use his words with his peers when he was frustrated.

The second teacher's perceptions changed over the six week intervention. The second kindergarten teacher noted in her personal interview she would have hoped to see a more dramatic change in the student's behavior. The teacher stated in her opinion she thought the student would have made more progress if the intervention was longer. In her pretest and

posttest electronic questionnaire the results were positive and the data displayed a change in her perception regarding the use of the social story in a positive manner.

The third teacher, a first grade teacher, stated she saw a change in the student's behaviors. Her perceptions changed according to the data from the pretest and posttest electronic questionnaire. The teacher stated in the personal interview the student would ask to go to the special education room to take a break, for a quieter place. This was a fantastic outcome.

The fourth teacher's, a second grade teacher, perceptions changed regarding the use of social stories. When reviewing the data it was clear the teacher's perceptions changed in a positive manner from the results of her of questionnaires and personal interview. The second grade teacher stated she noticed an improvement in the student's target behavior in the classroom and she believed it was due to the use of the social story.

The fifth teacher's perceptions slightly changed over the six week intervention. She was a second grade teacher and originally did not see a huge need for a social story in the classroom. She was more concerned with the student's behavior during recess. The results of the questionnaire and personal interview were positive but not as big of an improvement as the other case studies. During the personal interview the teacher stated she discussed the progress with the playground assistants and they stated to her that they had noticed a decrease in behaviors that were linked to the use of the social story prior to each recess period.

Discussion

The results of each of the case studies were positive and each teacher's perceptions changed for the better through the six week intervention. The research questions were answered through the use of the questionnaires and the personal interview. The teachers involved in the six week

intervention stated the students with high functioning autism read the social stories each day independently. The results could have been different if the students did not read the social story daily. The effects could have been negative and the teacher's perception could have been negative too. The students could have displayed the target behavior more frequently. Some of the teachers stated in the personal interview they felt the students would benefit if the intervention was longer. They felt the six week intervention wasn't long enough and one teacher stated she said she felt the student would benefit from utilizing the social story at the start of the school year.

Research could be stronger if the sample involved more students across the Midwest and of course, across the United States. If the six week intervention would have involved more students in rural schools beyond the one Midwestern school the data would have been able to show a range of results from utilizing social stories. The sample size could have involved more teachers across the United States and therefore the research would have involved more perceptions of teachers. Additionally, this research could have been more valid if there had been an inter-rater reliability check instead of the research conducting the data collection solely. The research would also have been stronger if the intervention was longer than six weeks. It would have been interesting to see the results of the intervention if it would have been half a year or even an entire school year. Research on how long the social stories were effective would also be useful information to the field of teaching young children with high functioning autism.

Conclusion

Overall the result of implementing a six week intervention involving the perceptions of teachers was positive. All five case studies showed an improvement in the teacher's perceptions

about the intervention in this study. The research questions were answered through the data in the pretest and posttest questionnaire and the personal interview. The research questions were: What do teachers perceive are the effects social stories have on students' behavior when working with students with high functioning autism in kindergarten through second grade at a rural Midwestern elementary school? What do teachers perceive are the effects social stories have on students' behavior when read independently by students with high functioning autism who attend a rural Midwestern elementary school?

Through the data collect, the first research question was answered. The teacher's perceived the effects of social stories were positive and found the use of the six week intervention involving social stories benefited the five students with high functioning autism. The second research question was answered as well and again was positive. According to the personal interview the five teachers found it beneficial for the students to read the socials stories independently and agreed the social stories were at the students' cognitive ability levels. The students' behaviors decreased and the teachers believed it was due to the six week intervention.

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Appendix A: Electronic Questionnaire

The electronic questionnaire will be sent to your email before and after the six week intervention. You will be asked to complete the questionnaire at that time. The answers will be kept confidential and the researcher will be the only one who has access to the answers.

After all the teachers complete the questionnaire the survey will be used to formulate a graph showing the effects for the social story intervention of the students' behavior. If you have any questions regarding the survey please contact Miss Putnam. Thank you again for your participation.

1. I frequently see the student displaying the target behavior.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. I believe the social story is an effective behavioral tool for young students with high functioning autism.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. I believe the social story alone can change a student's behavior.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. At this time, the student has received five or less behavior incident reports for the target behavior.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Powered by [SurveyMonkey](#)
Check out our [sample surveys](#) and create your own now!

Appendix B: Personal Interview

The personal interview will occur after the six week intervention has completed. The interview will take between 20-30 minutes of your time. The answers you provide will be confidential and will only be known by name to the researcher.

The researcher will ask you a question please take your time and provide as much detail as you see beneficial to answer your question. Please base your answers on your perceptions of the six week social story intervention. Remember back to where the student started and then where they finished after the six weeks. The researcher will write your answers as you verbally answer the questions. You will have a chance to look over your answers after the personal interview is done to ensure your answers were documented correctly.

Thank you for your participation.

26. Did the student read the social story daily before their target setting? Did they read the story another time as well?
27. After the six week social story intervention began did you notice a change in behaviors?
28. If yes, please give specifics?
29. Did the number of Behavior Incident Reports increase, decrease, or stay the same at the end of the six week intervention?
30. Do you feel the social story was at the appropriate cognitive level for this student? How could you tell?
31. Do you feel this student would have done better if he/she read the social story more frequently or for longer than six weeks? If yes, why?

Appendix C

To Research Study Participant:

Please read the consent form carefully before deciding whether or not you are willing to participate in the research study. Feel free to ask questions at any time. The researcher's contact information is listed at the bottom of the consent form.

Title of Research Project

The effects social stories have when working with students with high functioning autism in kindergarten through second grade at A rural Midwestern elementary school.

Reason for Conducting Research

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions teachers have when working with students in kindergarten through second grade with high functioning autism at A rural Midwestern elementary school.

Participant Selection

You were selected to participate in this study because you work with a student in your regular education classroom that has been identified with high functioning autism.

Participant Responsibilities and Length of Study

After you have returned the consent to participate in the study you will receive a questionnaire asking questions regarding a student with high functioning autism in your classroom. The questionnaire will take 10 to 15 minutes of your time and will be done electronically. After the questionnaire is received by the researcher, the information will be documented and graphed as a baseline. The second questionnaire will be sent electronically and again will take 10 to 15 minutes of your time. You will be required to complete the second questionnaire at the end of the six week intervention time. Lastly, at the end of the six week intervention you will sit down with the researcher and participate in a personal interview. The researcher will ask questions to gain your perceptions of the effects of social stories. The personal interview will take no longer than 30 minutes.

Confidentiality

Your identity and participating in the study will be confidential and anonymous. Your identity will be known to the researcher, it will not be known to anyone else who chooses to participate in the study. The results of the study will be published for scientific purposes but will not include your name or any other identifiable references to you. All responses will be written as: "Kindergarten teacher one" or "participants believed" All data collected from the study will be kept private as permitted by the law.

Benefits and Risks to the Participant

There will be no compensation provided to the participants. There are no identifiable risks to those who participate in the study.

Voluntary Participation

If you chose to participate in the study it is greatly appreciated and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to participate please return this consent form completely filled out, including your typed name at the end of the survey. Your typed name will serve as a legal signature.

Research Study Contact Information

Researcher Heidi Putnam
heidilynnput@gmail.com or 715-682-7827 ext. 3407

Research Study Authorization

Please type your name and today's date below. As stated previously your typed name will serve as your signature for the study. Please place an "X" on the line next to the statement choosing to participate in the study. Email the consent form to heidilynnput@gmail.com and save a copy for your records.

_____ I have read the information described above and agree to voluntarily participate in this study. I have received a copy of this informed consent form.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

