Abstract

In this qualitative research study, the experiences of 23 third grade students and their teacher in a diverse urban elementary school have been recorded as they discussed and analyzed the morals within fables, folktales, and fairy tales. Methods of data collection included teacher observations, interviews, surveys, and student work. Students read aloud and discussed a variety of moralistic stories in a whole group setting. They discussed these stories in greater detail within small groups, analyzing the lessons and values in each story, examining characters from multiple perspectives, and relating the story to their own lives. The purpose of analyzing moralistic stories was to encourage students’ development of their own values systems. Study findings suggested that analyzing moralistic stories in small groups helped students strengthen their own values systems and increased student engagement in reading and writing. Students also reflected upon these values when making decisions outside the classroom.