Children learn best in environments where they feel valued and appreciated. We are conducting a project designed to enhance school environment by building community and creating cooperative environments through the use of children’s stories. The stories for this project have been written in collaboration with local children’s book authors, and involve long term Mainer and Somali children working together to create new ideas and solve problems, including: creating a story for a writing contest, designing a mural for their school, and going on a class field trip.

If you consent to your child’s participation they will be taken out of class for about 15 minutes with a small group of other children, once a week for 6 weeks and read a short story by a Bates College student. Don’t worry, we will work with teachers to make sure that these reading sessions are not held during times when important academic material is being reviewed. After the short reading session they will be returned directly to their classroom.

After they have been read all six stories they will be taken out of the classroom individually two more times for 30 minutes: once 2 weeks later, and again 6 weeks later. During these sessions they will be asked to respond to some questions about their thoughts and feelings about children who may differ from themselves. For instance, they will be asked to think about how they might feel about playing with a Somali or non-Somali child in the future. Of course, there are no right or wrong answers to our questions, we just want to know whether or not the stories can be used to enhance the school environment in the Lewiston/Auburn area. Also, your child will be able to opt out of participating in the study at any time without penalty. Finally, at the end of the study teachers will respond to three short questions for each child in order to give us an indication of their English language abilities, which will help us better interpret the results of our study.

Your child will receive a small toy for participating in the project.

Your child’s participation would be greatly appreciated and would help us to learn how to best facilitate cooperative learning and play environments! If you agree to allow your child to participate in the project please sign below.

Child’s Name _____________________________________

Classroom teacher __________________________________

Parent/Guardian’s name ____________________________

Parent/Guardian’s signature__________________________

Thank you for your time and if you have any questions feel free to contact me, the project director!

Professor Jane Doe (jdoe@bates.edu, 555-1234)