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Effects Of Evaluative Praise Versus Behavior Descriptive Praise On Intrinsic Motivation And Behavior

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EFFECTS OF EVALUATIVE PRAISE VERSUS BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE
ON INTRINSIC MOTIVATION AND BEHAVIOR

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of a
Masters of Arts in Education.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

There are several circumstances that led to my interest in studying praise for students in the art room. As a child, I loved and surrounded myself with the arts. Then there are the observations that I have made from my classroom and specific students and seeing how they respond to behavior descriptive praise. Through my own education, I took additional classes and training that have used the different ideas of evaluative praise and behavior descriptive praise. All these things left me wondering, *what is the impact of behavior descriptive praise and evaluation praise on intrinsic student motivation and behavior?*

I remember during my student teaching experience how the teacher I was observing was correcting student behavior, but he was often acknowledging the negative behavior more than students who were doing their jobs. There was a specific second grade class where the students presented a lot of challenging and unwanted behaviors. I remember asking my cooperating teacher if I could try something a bit different during the second grade class, and focusing specifically on praising the students who were doing what the expectations were. We were both amazed that by ignoring more of the negative behavior and praising the positive behavior, the class climate quickly began to change. There were no longer students who mimicked negative behavior, but instead wanted to get recognized for the positive behavior. This led me to see the strength that praise can have on a classroom climate and student behavior.

My Experience

As a child growing up in midwestern suburban city, I always loved art. My passion of art turned into becoming an art teacher in a lower socioeconomic area years later. Growing up I was a typical middle class, suburban child who loved the Spice Girls, archery, playing with friends, and art. As I look back at my childhood and even adulthood, I realize that when I received praise, I excelled in what it was that I was attempting to accomplish. Thus making me wonder, *how does evaluative praise versus behavior descriptive praise affect a student's intrinsic motivation and behavior?*

Art always made sense to me. I always enjoyed that there is no right or wrong way with art, and how this provides one with a type of freedom when creating art. I recall being preschool age and telling my parents that when I grew up I was going to be an artist. Art has been in my family for as long as I can remember. Numerous members of my family have either pursued careers in the arts, or have natural artistic talent which they use for hobbies. Thus, after discovering the family lineage through art gave me feeling that art is in my blood. As I look back on several memories of finger painting or going to art museums and I always felt as though I could not get enough art.

I recall taking the one art class offered when I was in second grade. I attended a Montessori school; thus, with choosing our daily class schedule meant that there was little time for specialist courses. It was more important to complete all of our basic skills work. When I was finally selected to take the one week drawing class, I could not have been more excited. I remember of the drawing lesson as if it were yesterday. We were supposed to choose an zoo animal from a provided magazine clipping and draw it using

pastels. I chose a portrait of a giraffe, and as I stared at this picture, I realized that I had no idea how to begin to draw this picture. Soon an overwhelming sense of dread began to overcome my previous excitement of my drawing. The art teacher (an office lady who was talented in the arts) came over to help me get started. To my delight and then terror she drew the outline of my giraffe, and said, “there you go!” I spent the rest of the week slowly trying to add details to my giraffe picture, all while the other students came up to me and told me how ‘good’ of an artist I was, even though it was not my work. I felt crippled by the positive feedback I heard from my fellow classmates, and was terrified that I would not be able to appease the high standards that were now placed on me.

Finally, when the last day came, I had barely done any work. I feared wrecking the drawing that the teacher had done, and having my peers develop different opinions about my artistic talent. As the end of the last class drew near, the teacher came over to tell me that I need to finish this or they would not hang up my art, I felt devastated. For a child who loved art and desperately wanted it to look beautiful, I perceived that the expectations from the other teachers and my peers were too high and I feared failure. During the last fifteen minutes, I quickly added all the spots and detailed in a rushed scribbled manner, and I was greatly disappointed with the results. When my giraffe picture was hanging up in the hallway, I would hear kids saying “whose is that” with a negative tone in their voice. Receiving all the positive feedback right away, even on work that was not mine, put too much pressure on me. I realize the pressure caused me to be unmotivated to finish my drawing due to the fear of failure. Through my own personal

experiences, this causes me to wonder if educators should be using behavior descriptive praise with children, instead of the judgement ridden evaluative praise.

Even after the negative drawing experience, I continued to love art. In my high school, I was fortunate to have a variety of classes to take, and took anything and everything related to art. Then during my senior year of high school, I suddenly decided that I wanted to be an art teacher, and when I applied to colleges, I chose to attend a school where I could receive a degree specifically in art education.

While at the University of Wisconsin - Stout, I learned perseverance through descriptive feedback. During my senior year, all art students were expected to put on a senior show, showcasing their fifteen best pieces of work in a gallery setting. My professor and advisor would often give me descriptive feedback instead of regular evaluative praise. Through this type of feedback I learned how to work harder than I ever had previously. I remember one experience where I was attempting to make a artful dustpan, and I had cracked the metal. All my professor did is tell me what she saw me working on, and the mistakes I made in creating the dustpan, instead of offering helpful suggestions. I was so angry, but when I came back to class, I became more focused with a stronger theme for my senior show. Through the descriptive feedback I received, I became much more intrinsically motivated attempting to prove to myself that I could create beautiful work. Had my professor given me evaluative feedback, I doubt that I would have gained the same motivation and drive to do better.

As an art teacher I see students striving to make their ideas come to life through a variety of materials. I observe how the children are free to create during their younger

years without the fear of failure (preschool through second grade), and then how this idea that they are not good at art comes into their head between third to fifth grade. Through the idea of praise, I hope to learn different ways to provide more intrinsic motivation for my students, and build their confidence in their own unique abilities. After taking a course in classroom management from Hamline University during the summer of 2015, I learned about the difference between evaluative praise and behavior descriptive praise. Evaluative praise can be defined as a praise where a person is using a non-descriptive word to praise a child such as ‘good job.’ Behavior descriptive praise is when a person describes to the child what they did in a positive tone such as in math class, ‘You showed your work!’ I was soon a convert to the idea of behavior descriptive praise and began to experiment with this praise in my classroom.

Praise with Lower Socioeconomic Students

For the past six years now, I have had the honor to be employed at a school with students of a lower socioeconomic background located in the upper Midwest of the United States. The school has a few unique features to it, first of all “Johnson Elementary” (not real school name) is one of four other schools that has become a community partnership school that is still apart of a larger district, meaning the school is quite similar to a charter school with the amount of control the administrators and teachers have at the school. The school is located in a vibrant neighborhood full of art, music, community gardens, and students who have a lot of curiosity about the world. Johnson Elementary went from serving students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, to now only servicing students pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. Johnson Elementary

has a free and reduced lunch rate of 98%, thus all the students receive a free breakfast, lunch, and snack (provided from the federal government). In addition of the five hundred students that we service, approximately 25% of these students are labeled Homeless and/or Highly Mobile; lastly each school year approximately 40% of our student body is new to Johnson Elementary each year. Johnson Elementary is located in the poorest neighborhood in the entire state. The administration has provided several trainings to help aid the staff in classroom and behavior management. For example, most of the staff have been trained in EnVOY (nonverbal techniques to classroom management, by Michael Grinder), Responsive Classroom (building community in the classroom), Innocent Classroom (reminding us that every child has a need that needs to be met, by Alexs Pate), and The Zones of Regulations (by Leah M. Kuypers). These trainings made me wonder, could something as simple as praise used correctly help to change the motivation and behavior of my ever changing student population? Moore Partin et al. (2009) stated, “(t)eachers working with students in urban educational settings can use this self-monitoring strategy as a template for evaluating their own behavior to establish and maintain positive classroom environments that prevent problem behavior and promote student learning” (p. 177). As an art teacher I am always striving to create a positive space to allow my students to just focus on being kids.

Praise in the Art Room

In the art room, I believe that everyone can create art. The first four years of my teaching, I was always afraid to tell the students too much positive praise. My fear was that other students would hear the positive presented to one student, and wonder why they were not also receiving the same praise, causing them to get discouraged. So I often would try not to put too many “good jobs” or “good work” on a paper. The only time I would write evaluative statements would be on the student paper would have to be getting a 3.5 GPA or higher cumulative grade in art (this was only for middle school students). I would see my students smile at this, and often the students who were not having this positive praise from me, where simply students who were not completing their work. During the time I handed students progress reports, I would also see the frustration build on the students faces whose grades were not as high as others, they saw the good grade, but did not understand what the difference was in the effort or work completed. Using the evaluative praise in this situation left my students feeling confused on how to obtain the praise.

José's Art

My experience brings me to two different scenarios from two different students and using behavior descriptive praise instead of evaluative praise. First, of a third grade student named José (not real student name). He is a student that has never been afraid of creating any sort of art. José always likes making his art as big as possible and has a very expressive style to his mark making. José will never be a student that will make a drawing that looks exactly like a picture, and I really want him to love this about himself.

I remember during the winter of 2016, when José is painting a picture for an art contest that was supposed to be of something man-made that could fly. José, being José, had a very abstract variation to this assignment. He mixed all of paint the colors together and created a blueish-grey color to paint that he used for the entire picture. I saw the organic shape that José informed me was his airplane, then he seemed nervous about me submitting his art for the contest. I heard the boy sitting next to him, questioning him if his art was “good,” and how could he even think that he would have a chance at winning. After hearing this, I informed the other student that “José, used an expressive and abstract painting style!” By providing José a descriptive statement on the style in which he paints, instead of just saying he was good allowed him to self vindicate. Soon after my conversation with José, I was stunned to hear José say to his peer, “See, I’m good at art!” I listened to José reach this conclusion on his own, I realized that it allowed José to decide for himself that art is something that he is good at. This boost of confidence occurred through the use of behavior descriptive praise with José.

Tyrone Sharing

The next student sample is a second grade boy named, Tyrone (not real student name). One day while Tyrone was in art class, I observed that he offered to share his glue with the boy who was sitting next to him (the boy’s glue was not working). I went over to the boy and asked, “how did it make you feel when Tyrone shared his glue with you?” The boy responded “good,” then I looked at Tyrone and simply said, “You made someone feel good today!” When I walked away, I heard Tyrone say out loud, “I’m nice!” In telling him that he made someone feel good, lead him to his own conclusion

that he is a nice child. After using behavior descriptive praise with this student, Tyrone learned how being kind could positively affect his idea of himself and classroom behavior. If I had just told Tyrone that he was a nice student, he would be looking for me to inform him of what kind of child he is instead of discovering this for himself.

My Philosophy of Education and Classroom Management

I strongly believe that all children can and want to learn, but it is up to their educator to guide them in the correct direction that provides interest and engagement to the student. Yet, even with the best guidance, there are times when students may still have disruptive behaviors from not getting a need met such as: attention, love, or food (just to name a few). If these needs are not being met, then the student's motivation for learning may be pushed aside in order to meet their other needs. I conclude that something as simple as praise can have an impact in allowing a child to feel noticed and appreciated, but these feelings depend on how the praise is delivered and what the student needs.

In my upper midwestern school district an art curriculum is provided to the teachers; however, I often feel that this does not cause the most meaningful and engaging learning for my students. Experts in culturally relevant curriculums have stated that curriculum is not "ideologically neutral document" (Ladson-Billings, 2006). To affirm my belief that curriculum needs to be relevant to my students, I write my own curriculum based off of student interest and what is culturally significant. I think that Ladson-Billings (2006) put it the best: "(t)he point here is that culturally relevant teacher does not take the book as a given. Rather, the teacher asks himself or herself specific

questions about what reading this book is supposed to accomplish”(p. 34). Spending time in the community talking with students and families aids in my understanding of what students are interested in learning and how I can tie them to learning the state standards.

The art my students create, may not look like a teacher sample, but it is their art and solely theirs. I firmly believe in allowing the students creativity and freedom to express themselves. I think that it’s important to understand and realize that not all students have the small motor skills or the cognitive ability to understand all of the learning targets, but as long as they are trying and showing progress I feel that my students are successful. Not only do I believe all students can create art, I have also been fortunate enough to receive trainings on several community building and classroom management strategies such as: Envoy, Innocent Classroom, Responsive Classroom, and The Zones of Regulation. Each of these practices have brought the idea of not only praise, but the importance of having positive relationships with the students I serve.

Being employed in a lower socioeconomic school means that often my students are faced with challenges of lack of housing, food insecurities, and lack of overall stability. Due the the constant threat of change, it is import to be a consistent adult in a child's life. I focus in the art room to provide the students with positive relationships. Educators, community member and parents have even argued that having a positive relationship with students and their teachers relate to engagement and overall success in the school environment (Helman, Rogers, Frederick, & Struck, 2016). Ensuring that educators have a positive relationship with their students aid in the authenticity of how the praise is presented to the students. The students I have good relationships with, care

about the BDP, because they recognize authentic praise, verses a meaningless 'good job'. Although, in the school I work at, many of the students often move and the population of the students is ever changing, to the point where 40% are new to the school each year, which is almost 190 students of the roughly 400 total students.

Summary

Over the years, I have overcome my concerns about my art and have experienced first hand how descriptive praise can have a positive effect on my motivation. As a child, I experienced the negative side of evaluative praise with my giraffe drawing. Through adulthood I have seen how descriptive praise can really helps to focus and motivate students to do their best. My ambition through the capstone experience is to discover the effect that the different types of praise will have on my students. I anticipate that through something as simple as praise, I can help to increase student motivation and reduce negative behaviors with my students. *What is the impact of behavior descriptive praise and evaluation praise on intrinsic student motivation and behavior?* There have been several studies on behavior descriptive praise and evaluative praise and how praise can change students behavior, classroom climate, and overall intrinsic motivation in the art room.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Teaching has become just as much about classroom management as instruction, with a variety of management strategies used all over the world (Casey, Lozenski, & McMMainion, 2013). Often times in urban lower socioeconomic teaching environments, there is a greater emphasis placed on classroom management also known as behavior of the students, instead of learning and engagement (Casey, Lozenski, & McMMainion, 2013). It has been discussed how classroom management can be as simple as routines and procedures that the teacher instills in the children allowing a structured and predictable environment for the child to ensure the greatest amount of learning can take place (Everston & Emmer, 2012). These practices have been the focus of instruction instead of more modern practices such as growth mindset or how educators praise the student.

The idea of classroom management has even been broken down into four parts as stated by Everston and Weinstein (2006), “. . .(1) the importance of positive teacher-child relationships, (2) classroom management as a social and moral curriculum; (3) how classroom management strategies relying on punishment and external reward may negatively influence the classroom atmosphere; (4) the recognition that teachers must take into account students’ characteristics including age, cultural background, socioeconomic status, and so on” (p. 4). Even in these pillars of classroom management, relationships with the students remains at the top of the list in order to best enhance student learning.

In having an understanding of these basic ‘pillars’ of classroom management, I often catch myself considering how could the way educators praise students fit into classroom management? If educators, praise the students in the correct way, would this aid in the resolution of several classroom management techniques and build positive relationships with the student body? What if correcting negative and disruptive behaviors, and increasing students motivation in their own education could be impacted by the way their teachers praise the students? *What is the impact of behavior descriptive praise and evaluation praise on intrinsic student motivation and behavior?*

In recent years, there have been continuous stories and studies stating that adolescents are becoming harder to teach due to their behavior. Sugai and Horner (2002) claimed that there is an increase of students who display “aggressive, disruptive, and/or antisocial behaviors” and that this will cause a need for more special education help to be used by students. Although students of modern culture face many various challenges in their lives, it’s vastly important to understand how these behaviors change from different populations and areas where students are learning. In the training ‘Innocent Classroom’ by Alex Plate, he stated that all teachers need to find their students ‘good’ in order to understand how to teach them. Plate’s (2016) idea is that if we can understand students who are hungry, need love and attention, and peer acceptance, then the teacher can understand their student and help them learn. Often the students needs are overlooked and the cultural heritage of where the students are coming from are not always understood by their educators.

It has been declared that classroom management directly correlates to the amount of student academic achievement (Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008). It has even been stated (Casey, Lozenski, & McMansion, 2018) that, “(c)lassroom management of course, is inseparable from the material and ideological context of schools and societies” (p. 43). Even with classroom management correlating with student achievement, it is still important to understand that the knowledge educators now have on their students lives, is much greater. Teachers are now informed of the student living situations and if they are homeless living in shelters or with foster families. These aspects can also have an impact on how the educator must structure their classroom and provide feedback to their students. Classroom management is facet of teaching that builds community and eliminates disruptive behavior; however, without proper classroom management the students will not learn (Musti-Rao & Haydon, 2011). When teachers use proven strategies such as ‘growth mindset’ and positive relationship building, instilling in students that if they work hard they can achieve it and praising students based off of effort instead of product (Dweck, 2016).

When instructors are provided with successful classroom management strategies, the behavior will decrease while student engagement increases (Moore Partin et al., 2009). Begeny and Martens (2006) suggested that many new teachers enter into their teaching positions with insufficient classroom management training. In my experience in earning my undergraduate degree, my state school only required one course in classroom management, which left me feeling unprepared when I began at my first teaching position.

Casey, Lozenski, and McMMainion (2013) discussed that in urban areas with a lower socioeconomic population of students that ‘good classroom management precedes real teaching. Studies have even been presented stating that if teacher does not have classroom management, that their students will not be motivated to learn (Casey, Lozenski, & McMMainion, 2013). Thus, due to the challenges of teaching classroom management, there have been numerous strategies and programs created to solve the classroom management problem. There are several different programs and theories to increase community and reduce negative classroom behavior such as: EnVOY (Grinder, 2015), Responsive Classroom (Gecko Designs, 2017), Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports (Sugai, 2007), and Growth Mindset (Dweck, 2016). These programs often are presented to either reduce negative and disruptive behavior, or prevent future problems (Moore Partin et al., 2009). All of presented programs can be expensive to train educators in and truly work the best if implemented school wide (Moore Partin et al., 2009). What if correcting negative and disruptive behaviors, and increasing students motivation in their own education was as straightforward as how we praise them? *What is the impact of behavior descriptive praise and evaluation praise on intrinsic student motivation and behavior?*

Casey, Lozenski, and McMMainion (2013) suggested that when educators have a lack of classroom management that it directly correlates to lack of motivation and student learning. Thus being that if the teacher is not able to manage a class, then the students are not learning. There are other arguments that imply that teachers must not only emphasis classroom management, but also teaching to the standardized test. In recent years,

Mathison and Freeman (2003) suggested that teaching has placed an emphasis on student testing and percentage gained, which does not always meet the students needs. Even with all of this data, if educators can help to improve students confidence and motivation through the way they are praised.

In the same fashion, the literature review presents data on praise. There are several different types of praise with just as many names to define them, in Chapter Two Evaluative Praise (EP) and Behavior Descriptive Praise (BDP) will be the focus. Both of these types of praise provide benefits and challenges in the educational environment. It has been argued that behavior descriptive praise may help to increase a student's intrinsic motivation in their own education and that disruptive behavior would decrease while creating a positive classroom climate. In each of the following sections of this chapter, I will 1) define praise, 2) discuss how praise is used in education, 3) how student motivation, behavior, and class climate can be affected by praise, 4) and lastly examine how praise can be used in the classroom. Each of the different types of praise being used will be defined and examined thoroughly in each of the subtopics.

Praise Defined

The use of praise and education can appear to work seamlessly together. Praise has been thought to help teach our young how to set goals, appreciate their accomplishments, learn classroom behavior and social behavioral expectations. Brophy (1981) and DiGennaro, Martens, and Kleinmann (2007) agreed that when teachers are presenting praise this allows for a positive classroom environment to form, and has even been suggested that a teacher can set the whole tone for how their classroom runs.

Although there are several different types of praise, evaluative praise and behavior descriptive praise will be the focus of this capstone. Through behavior descriptive praise and evaluative praise, general information, motivation, behavior changes, and classroom climate will be examined. In addition, the relationships between students, educator and the class climate will be considered as well.

Evaluative praise. Evaluative praise is a familiar form of praise and has been described as a vague statement said to encourage the students academic or behavioral performance (Thompson et al., 2012). To define evaluative praise is when a person praises another person in a non-descriptive way that is unrelated to the target's response such as, "You're clever!" (Polick, Carr & Hanney, 2013). Evaluative praise is known for the simplicity in its use and how commonplace it has become. During the 1990's, education became all about a child's self-esteem; thus, teachers were expected to praise their young pupils as much as possible. The idea was that if a child had a high self-esteem then they would be more motivated, willing to try new things, and persevere when times were tough. However, after much analysis research has begun to disprove this thought (Educational Horizons, 2013). Dweck (2008) has even come to say that students who are constantly told how great they are through evaluative praise, have shown signs to lose their motivation and willingness to try new challenging things (Dweck, 2016; Kohn, 2001).

Praising students based on their intelligence instead of their effort has been thought to teach children that they are not able to become more intelligent or life-long learners (Weaver & Watson, 2004). Being that if a child is constantly told they are a

“good painter” the child may then fear painting things that they do not already know how to paint. When a child is labeled as being good at something, they can become fearful that the adults in their lives may see them fail and disprove of the child’s failures. Thus being that when an adult sees the child fail at these tasks the child may think that the adult is then assuming the child is of low intelligence or ability (Weaver & Watson, 2004).

Evaluative praise allows the educator to judge students through the completion of their work (Kohn, 2001) such as “nice work” when a child gets an A on a paper. Through this judgement Kohn (2001) stated “the most notable feature of a positive judgement isn’t that it’s positive, but that it’s a judgement” (para. 11). No matter how much teachers try to encourage their students, the idea of passing judgement on a child can put unnecessary stress on a young individual to have a need for approval from adults. Using evaluative praise with students will teach them what the teachers/schools/communities values are. Adopting evaluative praise prevents the student from having the ability to form their own opinion, while educators are continuously judging the youth. Regardless the perceived benefits, using evaluative praise is consistently passing judgement on the youth (Kohn, 2001). Passing judgement on another person can be hard to swallow for many people including children. Educators are teaching our students that adult opinions matter, and that their opinions do not, by presenting them continuously with evaluative praise, instead of allowing students to discover their own opinions of themselves (Kohn, 2001). Although, with the presented concerns, evaluative praise is still widely used as to motivate and encourage the students. Often using EP can be almost a ‘default’ setting,

due to the ease of slipping into old habits and the influence on the teaching apprenticeship (Borg, 2004).

The adoption of evaluative praise is extensively used by parents and educators alike due to ease in stating a simple two word phrase to evaluate the child. Many prefer to use this type of praise due to the simplicity in the nature to implement, and ease of effort it takes. Presently teachers often struggle to find time to present the student with detailed and behavior descriptive praise unique to each student. Using evaluative praise allows the educator to feel good about providing the student with general feedback. Although, when we say things like “good job” educators must question how authentic the praise is to the child (Moore Partin et al., 2009). When instructors are using evaluative praise with students, does this cause students to think in a specific “mindset?”

Dweck (2008) said that in her concept “mindsets” that there are different types of “mindsets” such as a “fixed mindset” meaning, that one feels that being good at math is something that they are born with and not something that can be improved. The idea is that if a student has to work hard at something, then the student feels that they are a failure (Educational Horizons, 2013). With a “fixed mindset” the teacher or student already knows their ability, and that the ability can already be measured (Educational Horizons, 2013). When students hear a teacher say, “let’s start with an easy math problem” this is very discouraging for students, especially those in a “fixed mindset”. This tells the students that what they are doing is supposed to be easy and if they already struggle in math, then they will be very discouraged from attempting anything harder due to the language the instructor presented. Not only do students become discouraged, they

can also suffer a loss of motivation when teachers continuously use evaluative praise with them.

Behavior descriptive praise. Behavior descriptive praise (BDP) has been called many things, such as descriptive praise and performance feedback just to list a few. Behavior descriptive praise is simply defined as describing what the student does in a positive tone, while not using any form of evaluative praise. BDP does not have to have any added positive comments of “wow” or “holy cow”, the main objective here is the tone and to describe to the student what the teacher observed. Behavior descriptive praise is when the response of the adult responds directly to describe what the child accomplished, “(y)ou raised your hand!” (Polick, Carr, & Hanney, 2013). Sutherland and Wehby (2001) suggested that this type of praise can be the most effective when it is presented instantly when using the descriptive approach (Dufrene, Lestremau, & Zoder-Martell, 2014). The use of behavior descriptive praise can aid in the development of the understanding of expectations in young children. Offering descriptive praise helps the child to understand what the teacher expects of them; for instance “Johnny sat down criss-cross applesauce” (Polick, Carr, & Hanney, 2013). Not only does behavior descriptive praise aid in changing the behavior in one child, but when stated in front of other children, they too will understand the teacher’s expectations. When BDP is used, it supports a teacher's classroom management encouraging the students to present the chosen academic and behavioral expectations in the classroom (Briere, Simonsen, Sugai, & Myers, 2015).

Behavior descriptive praise not only encourages children's academic and behavioral expectations, but descriptive praise can also teach a child social skills. This can occur when an adults provides feedback based on a targeted social skill the child is working on (Hemmeter, Snyder, Kinder, & Artman, 2010). Musti-Rao and Haydon (2011) disclosed that using this type of (behavior descriptive) praise can increase the positive environment of the classroom. However, Conroy, Stichter, Daunic, and Haydon (2008) advised that in order for these changes to really occur teacher should offer more descriptive praise during the introductory stages of learning new skills or behaviors.

Using BDP does not only teacher students certain social skills, but behavior descriptive praise can lead to the idea of the “growth mindset” as identified by Dweck (2008). This idea of “growth mindset” is that a person’s intelligences is not given but can grow. Dweck’s concept is that if educators use the concept of “mindsets” and praising a student's effort will cause the student to be become intrinsically motivated with their own education (Educational Horizons, 2013). When praising a student's effort the instructor in ultimately praising a student for the strategies they tried and for perseverance in their own learning. Through descriptive praise students understand that they may have to work hard at something in order to become better in the subject, for instance a math teacher may say, “Johnny, you showed your work!”

Praise in Education

Educators, administrators, and parents use praise to teach children expectations (Kohn, 2001). Praise can have an impact on the classroom environment being that when educators increase praise, disruptive behaviors decrease (Dufrene, Lestremau, &

Zoder-Martell, 2014). Weaver and Watson (2004) proposed that verbal praise can increase students interest in learning and their overall performance, but when actual rewards tend to undermine students intrinsic motivation. Praise is used to help people set goals and see the expectations that others have of them. However, not all praise is equal in providing motivation and teaching students expectations. Praise can be something as simple as telling a child “good work” or detailed as “wow, look at how you worked the entire hour on your math homework.” Many teachers without realizing it slip between using evaluative praise and descriptive praise. It is important for educators to become aware of the praise they use to see if a difference is occurring in either student behavior or motivation (Dweck, 2016; Moore Partin et al., 2009).

Catania (2012) proclaimed that offering students praise reduces negative behaviors in the classroom allowing the student to self-regulate and maintain their own behavior. When educators use praise correctly, it can increase the amount that students focus on the effort they put in a project, instead of being evaluated by the teacher (Dweck, 2016). When students are praised justly, their motivation will increase allowing them to take an interest in their own learning. In effort-based learning (often used in behavior descriptive praise) the child is applauded for the effort and strategies they used in their own learning, instead of just the completed product (Dweck, 2008). This correlates with evaluative praise and behavior descriptive praise, where evaluative praise is about the final product and behavior descriptive praise discusses specifically what the child does. Dweck (2016) stated that if a child does not put forth enough effort, then the child could see this as the reason why they failed.

When teachers use praise consistently it helps to increase a positive classroom environment. Moore Partin et al. (2009) said, “(c)onsistent and appropriate use of teacher praise and increased opportunities to respond may serve as an important first step to establish predictable and positive classroom context that promote successful primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention and intervention supports” (p. 172). Creating a positive classroom climate aids in positive student/teacher relationships and student engagement. Using praise helps to support classrooms in “providing multi level prevention and intervention supports in urban school settings” (Moore Partin et al., 2009, p. 173).

Evaluative Praise

Motivation. Numerous studies have determined that motivation can be decreased with the use of evaluative praise (Dweck, 2016; Kohn, 2001; Musti-Rao & Haydon, 2011). Kohn (2001) argued that evaluative praise can discourage children from attempting to complete work for fear of failure. Informing a child that they are a strong reader can cause the child to become fearful of making mistakes, resulting in them losing the motivation to read. When the child faces a challenge in something that they were told they were good at, they will feel like a failure when they cannot persevere past the “easy challenges.” This can be a sense of learned helplessness after being constantly told this is what they are good when they are trying to learn something new (Skipper & Douglas, 2011). When a child hears the words “good job” or “good work” they become focused on making the other person happy with them. Thus, indicating evaluative praise turns the child into focusing on extrinsic motivation in their education instead of intrinsic motivation, always striving to obtain the praise to make the other person happy. This can

then cause a student to work for the for the two word phrase, instead of the internal good feeling that they worked hard for something (Educational Horizons, 2013).

The more we present a child with rewards, whether the rewards are tangible or verbal, this can cause our children to lose interest and motivation in what they are doing when they are constantly being rewarded for it (Kohn, 2001). The concept that Weaver and Watson (2004) suggested that in rewarding a child for learning can cause a loss of a child's natural curiosity and a decrease in motivation without incentive. This can even be felt through the idea of children need to get something (a reward, positive praise) to motivate the child to do something, anything...thus creating “praise junkies” (Kohn, 2001). In a 2013 interview Dweck even stated, “in the mid-1990s, we hypothesized that praising intelligence would backfire and undermine motivation and cognitive performance, but that praising the process a student engaged in enhance motivation and learning” (Educational Horizons, 2013, para 5). Not only is a lack of motivation a fear of evaluative praise, but it does not present a child with clear behavior expectations.

Behavior. When educators want a student's behavior to change the teachers will often present the child with a simple phrase of “good job.” However, when a child hears only “good job,” they are unaware of what specifically the teacher liked. In addition, when the other children hear the first child get praised for their good behavior, they have to have been paying attention to what the first student was doing. Otherwise the second child will not understand their own negative behavior that the teacher is not praising them. This can lead to confusion among several students when the teacher is saying

something that is not descriptive does not inform the child what they did was good, they just hear something was good.

Evaluative praise can also backlash on a teacher causing the children to turn into “praise junkies” as Kohn (2001) puts it. Kohn said that if we are constantly praising our children, then their need to be constantly praised will increase. This will cause students to have decreased motivation and worry about failing on doing challenging task. If a child has the insatiable appetite to be praised, they will have to be constantly encouraged to do new things whether this is a positive behavior or a new task.

This can also go back into Dweck’s idea of “mindsets.” If a child is constantly being told to stop, or take breaks can put them into a “fixed mindset” of being a “bad” kid. When the child hears nondescript praises to the other children, then the child does not understand how to change their behavior. When this pattern continues, it can allow for a child to begin to believe they are “bad” due to the constant reprimands they receive. Moore Partin et al. (2009) argued that “the quality of teacher praise is an important determinant of its effectiveness in increasing appropriate student behaviors” (p. 174). Thus using evaluative praise does not give the child enough information of what the teacher expects for the correct behavior; therefore, more negative behavior will persist.

Academic atmosphere. When students are given freedom to do independent work when given EP it is often thought that this will give the students permission to complete less work, and in general be more off task. Thus, ask Kohn stated concerns from other teachers by stating, “‘working independently’ is a euphemism for higher rates of disruption and time off task” (Kohn, 1996, p. 4). Class climate changes through the

differences in praise, cultivating a group of students who are constantly bombarding their educator for more and more praise instead of allowing themselves to feel their own success (Kohn, 2001).

Behavior Descriptive Praise

Motivation. Through multiple investigations, research has shown that when using behavior descriptive praise with students that their motivation is increased. When students are given praised based on their effort and strategies they used, studies determined that the children are more willing to persevere and try harder at more challenging tasks. This gives the students the conclusion that intelligence is not a fixed trait, but through effort is something that can be gained (Gunderson et al., 2013). As compared to children who receive BDP, children who are faced with evaluative praise and a fixed mindset, often get frustrated and give up on new or challenging tasks (Dweck, 2016). When a student has their effort noticed it will cause the child to try harder without the fear of inadequacy, simply because the student knows that you will be praising them for how much they tried. This informs the child that intelligence is something that they can work for instead of a fixed trait.

The idea of using behavior descriptive praise to increase students' motivation ties together with Dweck's theory of "growth mindset." When students are praised for their effort and hard work, they begin to believe that they did well at a task simply because they worked hard, not because it was easy (Educational Horizons, 2013). This brings up the concept of the "healthy perfectionist" having a "growth mindset" (Chan, 2016). A "healthy perfectionist" believes that the more they try at something, the better they will

get. These students conclude that they must work hard and have high expectations for themselves. This type of thought is often brought along with teachers using descriptive praise to the students, allowing them to understand that their effort will aid in their mastering a skill and perfecting it (Chan, 2016).

Not to mention, using behavior descriptive praise has been proven to benefit students who struggle with emotional behavioral disturbance problems and autism. This gives the children clear expectations of behavioral, social, and academic goals. When using vague statements (evaluative praise) with these children, who often already struggle with understanding social norms and expectations, behavior descriptive praise gives the students unprecedented clarity to what is expected of them and their peers. Polick, Carr, and Hanney (2013) went as far to say, “(behavior) descriptive praise has been recommended widely as an important teaching tactic for children with autism” (p. 593). Adults are able to focus on specific strategies with the students who struggle with emotional behavioral and autism, providing immediate feedback informing the child that their behavior was what the instructor was seeking from their students.

By the same token, when a child A is being kind to child B, they are more likely to feel good about the situation when we point how child A looks when responding to child B’s reactions. This allows the child A to think to themselves, “I’m nice.” The use of this has become evident, when talking with students and pointing out that by sharing they made another student feel good, hearing the child responding out loud “I’m nice!” This all occurred within the child A’s own thought process instead of being told that he was nice. Rathel, Drasgow, Brown, and Marshall (2014) articulated that, “(t)eachers, who are

able to implement high ratios of positive-to-negative communication behaviors with students may be especially effective teachers because they provide many teaching and learning opportunities that that enhance meaningful engagement” (p. 219). Classrooms that have immense rates of disruptive behavior often have teachers who reprimand their students for these behaviors, instead of using behavior descriptive praise (Musti-Rao & Haydon, 2011). Thus, teaching the child through BDP allows the student to make their own judgements about themselves, instead of being told what to think of themselves (Musti-Rao & Haydon, 2011). Teachers should use praise to specify the desired behaviors of the students, while providing feedback in a timely manner (Moore Partin et al., 2009).

Behavior. Research has proven that when teachers use more descriptive praise, the result is that student negative and disruptive behavior decreases (Dufrene, Lestremau, & Zoder-Martell, 2014). It must be noted that when the children's disruptive and negative behavior decrease, it was a direct result from the teachers using more behavior descriptive praise; the use of evaluative praise appeared to have no change on the student's behavior in these studies (Moore Partin et al., 2009). When educators and adults use behavior descriptive praise then the child has a clear comprehension of what it expected of them and it allows the child to decide for himself or herself what they choose to do (Hemmeter, Snyder, Kinder, & Artman, 2010). The use of BDP has shown success in teaching young children correct behaviors (Hemmeter et al., 2010). The teacher is able to provide immediate feedback to the child such as, “(w)ow, Caleb rose his hand!” By stating this to the child, in front of the rest of the children informs the students that the

teacher is looking for students to raise their hands before speaking. In a study that Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrill (2008) performed, they concluded that by using behavior specific praise consistently in four different classrooms that they saw an increase on students on task behaviors. Sugai (2007) have proven that the use of behavior specific praise has even been documented to improve academic and social behaviors.

In like matter, to truly increase the behavior in the classroom environment, tracking and training in the use of descriptive praise can be the quickest way to see results in the classroom (Musti-Rao & Haydon, 2011; Rathel, Drasgow, Brown, & Marshall 2013). Often teachers do not properly use descriptive praise or lack the general use of praise. The use of performance feedback and data tracking with teachers does help them to increase their own amount of descriptive praise that they use. When teachers begin to use more behavior descriptive praise, they often see a reduction in the amount of disruptive behaviors (Dufrene, Lestremau, & Zoder-Martell, 2014). Research demonstrates that when educators increase the amount of behavior descriptive praise they use will increase the amount students' on-task behavior, compliance, and task engagement (Fullerton, Conroy, & Correa, 2009; Sutherland & Wehby, 2001); and reductions in off-task behavior (Austin & Soeda, 2008), and rates of disruptive behavior (Mysti-Rao & Haydon, 2011). Wheatley et al. (2009) proposed that when adults consistently use the correct praise with their students, the students will respond in maintaining more on task behaviors for longer periods of time.

Often times when teachers are dealing with student behavior it is in reaction to an incident, if educators are to be proactive on student behavior such as using descriptive

praise, then this will create a positive community and encourage positive behaviors and learning (Moore Partin et al., 2009). Handling students with disruptive and negative behavior often can be challenging, especially for new teachers who have not experienced a wide varieties of behaviors. It is easy to get sucked into constantly correcting the negative behavior; however, this can lead to more students acting up to receive adult attention (Moore Partin et al., 2009). Often the students who receive the most attention from their teachers depended on the amount of “aggressive and disruptive behavior” (Moore Partin et al., 2009). There are numerous studies that show teachers taking the time to consistently correct negative behavior, allowing for the student to continuously take place in negative teacher/student relationships and receive little to no attention from the teacher recognizing their positive behavior (Moore Partin et al., 2009). Therefore the reason why using descriptive praise is critical way to maintain a positive classroom culture with less disruptions.

Academic atmosphere. Providing students with BDP can change the infrastructure of the class to a student body that is inquisitive and praised for effort (Dweck, 2016). In using BDP educators can share with their students the expectations for the materials allowing them to have easier access to what they need to enhance their own learning (Helman, Rogers, Frederick, & Struck, 2016). In praising a student for their effort allows children to feel like they can make mistakes and that learning is not perfect (Dweck, 2008).

Praise in the Classroom

Teachers use praise often in their classrooms. Recently a variety of trainings have come into light that attempt to focus more praise and community in the classroom. For instance, growth mindset does not only preach effort, but brings up the idea of how to praise a child to create more self-directed motivation for learning (Dweck, 2016). Simonsen et al. (2008) stated, “praise in an empirically supported classroom management practice” (p. 363). Similar to judgement having a negative impact on students, doing direct comparison on what students can do, can also have a negative effect on classroom management and student motivation (Casey, Lozanski, & McMansion, 2013).

Not to mention, educators must still be considerate of all of their students. Some students may not want to have attention directed to them in front of the class or attention in general. Musti-Rao and Haydon (2011) suggested that educators must really know their students in order to understand any special need that the student may have and how to support them. There are times when just viewing a student's change in behavior may not be enough, but collecting data on the student's performance can add additional support for the cause (Musti-Rao & Haydon, 2011). Kohn (1996) argued that children need to be given positive reinforcement in order to train the children to act in the way you want them to.

Some students may or may not enjoy descriptive praise, just like how praise may work better with different age groups. It is important for the teacher to ensure that the praise they are offering the student is genuine. If the students believe that the praise is not genuine then they may lose respect for the educator or respond in negative behavior ways

(Kohn, 2001). Although it can be challenging for teachers to use a variety of descriptive behavior feedback, it will provide an authentic experience for the child. Once a person practices using behavior descriptive praise, they will find that it becomes easier to quickly come up with a variety of different praises for the students. Often this works best when teachers journal or chart their use of descriptive praise (Rathel, Drasgow, Brown, & Marshall, 2014).

In a study that Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, and Merrill (2008) performed, they discovered, “(te)acher participants show a trend of increased use of behavior-specific praise and decreased use of general praise in their classrooms at post intervention and follow up” (p. 325). These researchers noticed that when the teachers used descriptive praise, the disruptive behavior decreased and the students were able to stay more focused on their academics. The use of descriptive praise has even been thought as a way to use ‘proactive or preventative’ behavior strategies in the classroom, where it can easily teach children the desired behaviors in the classroom community (Hemmeter, Snyder, Kinder, & Artman, 2010). When schools and districts offer training, the teacher often has to attend a course. It has been demonstrated that when teachers take trainings along with coaching and data collection that their amount of descriptive praise increases, students work harder, and the negative classroom behaviors decreases. After training your brain to use descriptive praise, it can be an easy way to change behavior and increase student motivation (Musti-Rao & Haydon, 2011). Rathel, Drasgow, Brown, and Marshall (2014) said, “(r)esearchers have identified teacher praise as a highly effective teaching strategy for improving academic performance and classroom management” (p. 220). This leads

the conclusion to be that *using behavior descriptive praise will increase a student's intrinsic motivation and on task academic behavior.*

Conclusion

Although there are several types of praise that educators use, some forms of praise are better at increasing students motivation in learning and decreasing disruptive behavior in the classroom. It has even been stated that a child's gender could also have an influences on the types of praise they prefer, but either way the research shows that descriptive praise will often increase a student's motivation and academic engagement. In order to help aid students in reaching their full potential, it is import that teachers, parents, and members from the community understand the importance on focusing on effort of the students instead of just evaluative praise statements (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009).

Thus will using BDP instead of EP allow teachers to see the good and positives in their own students? Can using BDP allow teacher to change the way they see their students in a positive light and allow them to have higher expectations of their students? As educators, we often think of how we manage students, instead of how we support their questioning of the world around them (Casey, Lozenski, & McMMainion, 2013). It is important to understand that we must 'scaffold' our students and help them understand the importance of effort to put forth as opposed to only the outcome (Casey, Lozenski, & McMMainion, 2013).

Kohn (2001) stated five reasons why teachers should stop using evaluative praise: manipulating children, creating "praise junkies," stealing a child's pleasure, losing

interest, and reducing achievement. The more educators use descriptive praise, the more it allows students to create their own evaluations about what is good and bad, instead of having to rely on other adults (Kohn, 2001). In addition, the more educators practice using behavior descriptive praise as compared to evaluative praise, will be surprised by the ease that behavior descriptive praise can have along with the positive changes in the student's classroom.

Praise does not only help the students intrinsic self-esteems, but it builds stronger classroom community, by creating a positive learning environment (Musti-Rao & Haydon, 2011). Teachers are the driving force in how the students should treat each other and the amount of effort that needs to be given for a class. Using behavior descriptive praise can increase the positive student and teacher relationships by providing clear expectations and goals. Rathel, Drasgow, Brown, and Marshall (2014) have expressed that “...researchers have provided evidence to support that positive teacher-student interactions, the first critical indicators might lead to improvements in the other two indicators and create effective learning environments for students” (p. 219).

By the same token, praise can assist in the motivation of our students, by conceding them to realize for themselves that what they did was good. Praise can allow the students to self evaluate instead of relying on adults to tell them what is good or wrong. Christie (2016) even said that praise can “(h)elp your student have a can do attitude by praising his or her effort as well as accomplishments” (p. 390). Thus, the more educators provide students with specific and descriptive praise, they will increase their own curiosity for learning. Using descriptive praise encourages students to take on a

“growth mindset” creating perseverance in their perfection, instead of fearing failure (Chan, 2016). Praise can build confidence and self-esteem in a child, by allowing them to think for themselves. In using descriptive praise the child will be allowed to and encouraged to try new challenging task and be praised for the effort they put in, instead of what they did right. In the end, Kohn (2001) declared, “what kids do need is unconditional support, love with no strings attached” (para. 19). *What is the impact of behavior descriptive praise and evaluation praise on intrinsic student motivation and behavior?*

In the next chapter the data that was collected will be examined and compared to fully understand the results of the behavior descriptive praise compared to using evaluative praise.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Introduction

Praise can have an impact on a student's motivation and behavior in the classroom. As presented in the previous chapter, there are several different types of praise, and show stronger student intrinsic motivation and positive behaviors. My research took me to investigate *what is the impact of behavior descriptive praise and evaluation praise on intrinsic student motivation and behavior?* Through conducting independent research and creating an action research project, I was curious to find out answers to my research question. If my research conducted in chapter two was accurate, then based off the evidence behavior descriptive praise would have more of a positive impact on students. Polick, Carr and Hanney (2012) have shown that using behavior descriptive praise will teach students the classroom expectations and social norms. Catania (2012) suggested that using descriptive praise would allow teachers to target specific behaviors of a class or student with easy targeted praise. Kohn (2001) said that using evaluative praise causes teachers to consistently judge their students, taking away students self satisfaction of discovering that they did it right.

Research Paradigm

I chose to focus on the idea of praise, because of working in a challenging urban environment where due to lack of stability at home, students often struggle to focus and follow directions. Hence, would using something as simple as praise can aid in the creation of a positive classroom community. My district offers several paid trainings on

classroom management such as: EnVOY and Responsive Classroom. Yet, with these offerings I could not help but wonder about an article that I read by Kohn titled “Five Reasons to Stop Saying ‘Good Job’” (2001). In this article, Kohn stated several reasons why a person should stop using evaluative praise, and instead begin using behavior descriptive praise. This article had a profound impact on me, and I began to attempt using behavior descriptive praise in my classroom fall semester of the 2015-2016 school year. I noticed that this helped me to change student behavior by pointing out what the students were doing correctly and describing it. When I began to see this change, I wondered how and if I could prove my inference.

Although the data collection was initially completed with a colleague, the data and research that is presented is solely mine. My colleague and I would discuss the research we were doing, but all of the data presented was from the art room alone.

Choice of Method

To conduct my research I chose to use the mixed methods form of research. I adopted the mixed methods form of research, because not only was I going to be giving the students surveys, but I would also be collecting and charting my own data on the students. Using the mixed methods of research allowed me for the freedom that I needed to conduct an action research project on praise in the art room. Flexibility was a necessity in the art room, being that I often only would see students once a week and the projects and materials used varied greatly.

Setting

This study took place in an elementary school art room. Often the students come from very challenging backgrounds and home environments, and the students often bring their stress from home to school. In an environment where children are surrounded by violence, housing issues, and food security problems the students have many struggles to overcome to be engaged in their own education.

Although, many of my students face many struggles and adversities that I will never be able to comprehend, their resilience and perseverance is inspiring. The community where my students live, from the outside observer, is thought to be plagued by violence and drugs. However in my six years of working at my current school, I have come to understand the vibrancy and strength of the community. The students love the arts and creating beats and rhythms on the tables. The amount of creative expression is impressive where the students always figure out creative solutions to their problems. Through these experiences, the students are full of life and finding humor in the mundane.

Many of the students do not have easy access to a computer, however the cell phone technology has given my students the freedom to have the internet. Thus, I am able to give the students website and sources for them to express their curiosity at home while using the technology.

Community. The community where the school is located has been plagued with crime and generational poverty. There are continuous shootings and gang violence in the area, and even on school grounds. A few times a year, the school goes into a code yellow,

meaning that there is a threat outside of the building (typically a shooting or other violent event that occurred within less than a quarter mile). Many students have very unstable home lives, and it is common for students to switch schools once a year and/or move houses/apartments. Many of the families in the community have large families five children or more. It is rare to meet a child who has only one sibling or is an only child. There is little parent involvement with the school. Often times the parents do not provide the school with an accurate phone number to reach them, or the phone gets turned off. Yet, through all of these challenges, it is still clear to see that this community still has strong family ties and cares deeply about their children.

District. This study took place in an upper midwest lower socioeconomic school. In a statewide school ranking, 'Johnson Elementary' was found to be rated at 770 out of 842 schools in the state (School Digger, 2017). The school has a population consisting of African American 54.8%, Hispanic 35.2%, Caucasian 4%, Asian 3.5%, and Native American 2.5%. The 98% of the families qualify for free or reduced lunch; therefore, every student at the location receives a free breakfast, lunch, and snack. Of these students approximately 25% of the students qualify as homeless (living in shelters) or highly mobile (staying short term with a friend or family member). In the 2015-2016 school year, roughly 40% of the student body was new to the school, most of the new students were in grades third through fifth grades. The school also offers four Transitional Dual Language (TDL) classes. These classes teach the students half of the time in English and the other half in Spanish. Thus ensuring that these students do not lose their cultural heritage. There is one section of TDL in each of the follow grades: kindergarten, first

grade, second grade, and third grade. Previously the school served students prekindergarten through eighth grade. Currently, the school now serves only grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade.

School. The staff that are employed at the school are predominantly white. Most of the teachers at the school have been teaching for five years or less, with a school's average of six years of teaching. Since the school has community partnership, classrooms in grades kindergarten through third grade each have a scholar coach. The scholar coach is a person who is employed by the Reading Core, to aid the teachers instruction in the classroom (not during specialist time). Even with this extra support, the scholar coaches does not join their students in the specialist classes, where this study was conducted. Diversity is presented in the support staff (non-licensed teachers) such as the behavior support team, family liaison, scholar coaches, office staff, lunch staff, and other support staff.

As the art teacher, I am a white women, monolingual teacher, from a suburban middle class family. Often my values are of that of suburban America. I live approximately nine miles away from where I work, but yet I still feel very connected to the school and the community. I often have the impression that as a caucasian women there are certain things that I will never fully understand do to things like 'white privilege' and being raised in a very different environment. When I was my students age, my family was thrifty and we shopped at the local Goodwill, but even with being thrifty my sister and I always had enough food to eat without assistance from the government. I find that understanding that my own background is very different my students has

allowed me to value and understand the differences from my childhood versus the students.

Art Room. The study took place in the art room. During the time the study was conducted, I was teaching five, fifty-five minute classes a day. I taught approximately one hundred and twenty five different students a day, totally to about five hundred students a week. In the art room, the students use a variety of materials and create both two and three-dimensional art. Each year the students have a project that is special to that grade. For example, third grade students enter their art into a competition and fifth grade students create a large mural. The art room can often sound loud with Kidz Bop music playing and students socializing while creating.

The art room has four tables that can seat eight students, but typically only six students will sit at each table. The room also has two break areas away from the tables. There is updated technology in the space of a Promethean board, document camera, and a Macintosh computer.

The art room also contains a kiln, storage closet, plenty of cabinetry, and three sinks. The art room is the second largest classroom in the entire school, beside the gym and multi-purpose room. There are labels in English and Spanish on the cabinets and drawers informing the students where the supplies are located. The supplies are easily accessible to the students and students are encouraged to get what they need to complete their work. Classroom routines and procedures are taught at the beginning of every year, and although the student get older and change grades, the routines and procedures remain relatively the same from preschool through fifth grade.

Participants

Since I am the art teacher, I teach the entire school population throughout the school year. I decided to focus my action research on my third grade students. I choose third grade students since I teach these students the entire year, and I have taught these most of these students for at least two years. In third grade, there are less new students to the school. Lastly, third grade has a total of four different classes, making it easier for me to choose the two selected classes that will participate in the study.

There are a total of four different third grade classes, one of these classes being a TDL class. Each class contains between 18-19 students. Being that third grade was the first class of the day (8:20-9:15), I often had student absences or tardy students entering. It was common to see one or two students finishing up their breakfast before beginning their projects.

One of the classes was taught using evaluative praise while the other class was taught using descriptive praise only. Teaching two groups of third grade students using either evaluative praise or behavior descriptive lasted approximately four months in total (from beginning of February 2017 through end of May 2017), each class period was for fifty-five minutes and met approximately once or twice a week. After the study was complete, I continued to document my students in the EP group and switch to using BDP praise during the last two weeks of school, however the data was not used in this study due to the lack of stability that is often presented during the last two weeks of school.

In addition, one of our physical education teachers also participated in this study with the same students in physical education class. This teacher also did a teacher student

surveys, documented some behaviors, using the specific praise for each class. During the course of her study, we were able to cross compare our data and discover if we each had the same findings. Although, each of our studies were different, the amount of BDP and EP could greatly vary from teacher to teacher and the subject matter it was used.

Methods

When completing this action research I needed to use the mixed methods form of research containing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. I chose to use this approach with the understanding “(t)he core assumption for this form of inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone” (Creswell, 2014). The desired outcome was to have the most comprehensive data to fully understand whether my predictions were accurate. The mixed methods forms data collected are the following: student surveys, journaling, behavior tracking, and cross comparing data with a colleague doing similar research.

School District Approval. Since I used my students to conduct my research, I had to secure permission not only from Hamline University, and my the school administrator. The students were aware that I was collecting data to enhance my teaching practice and understood that the surveys would not have an impact on their grades or their treatment. All students received the same instruction, and curriculum. The independent variable changed was the type of praise the students received. I also stated that the education of the students involved in the study would not interfere with the

students learning. The letter disclosed the full intent of the research and what would take place with the students in the art room.

Research Tools

Several tools were used in the completion of this study. Students were given surveys on four separate occasions in the art room and three times in physical education to gauge their motivation and engagement. Tracking and charting students behavior for each of the classes on the study and then journaling about the classes.

Surveys. Each student was given a survey seven different times throughout the four month study. The surveys asked the students three simple questions:

- do you enjoy art class?
- what do you feel is your effort in art class?
- do you think you are good at art?

The survey also had four different responses that the students could answer back which were: no/none, okay/kind of, good, and great (Appendix A). The answers also contained simple face emoji's for the students to relate the words with, since not all of the third grade students are not strong readers. The surveys were read out loud in a neutral tone to aid in with students who struggle with reading and comprehension. The purpose of the questions was to understand the students confidence in the subject and compared with their artwork to understand if the praise had a direct impact on a student's performance (see Appendix A) . The first survey was conducted before the study began to obtain a baseline of data. Approximately every three to five weeks, the students would take

another survey. The surveys contained the student's name to track the individuals students data; however, the students data will remain confidential.

The same surveys were given in the physical education classroom by my colleague. She presented the two third grade classes with the same information and the surveys at approximately the same time, but the data that will be focused on is from the art room only.

Behavior tracking. During each of the two, third grade classes, I tracked student behavior each time a student needed to be redirected, took a break, received a negative or positive phone call home, or needed a behavior support person to assist with the student. During each third grade class, I would chart this data on a post-it: writing a R for redirection, B for break, P - for a negative phone call home, P + for a positive phone call home, and S for behavior support called, and OS for out of school suspension. I also wrote the students names down to understand if the same students were having the same issues during multiple art classes and to compare their surveys with their behavior. Behavior tracking graph found in the next chapter. During my prep time after these classes, which took place right after my third grade classes, I would document the data and enter a teacher journal.

Teacher journaling. I chose to journal after each of the third grade classes participating in the study. My goal was to journal for five to ten minutes a day about the third grade lesson that was taught. In my journal, I gave more details for why I thought the changes in students attitude, motivation or behavior occurred. In addition, if a

negative behavior transpired I wrote down who it was and what occurred. During the course of the journaling, I also documented the classroom climate and if it changed.

Baseline. To obtain the baseline data, each of the students participating in the research took a simple survey asking them three questions: do you enjoy art class, what do you feel is your effort in art class, do you think you are good at art? The baseline survey was conducted in the fall of 2016, prior to conducting my action research in the spring of 2017. This was the first survey given to the students in October 2016. These questions are given to students on a one to four scale using a smiley face system to aid with children's understanding (see Appendix A). This data will be charted, for each class in art and physical education.

To obtain the students data on their behavior, I charted student behavior for two art periods, during the second semester of art class. I charted the students behavior later due to the high influx of new students that enter the school and allowing for the rules and procedures to of the school to have begun to settle in. In addition, I had just finished a five week period of team teaching double art classes. Thus I wanted to give my students time to get used to a smaller class and one teacher again. The student's behavior was charted focusing on the number of redirections needed, breaks taken, phone calls home (both positive and negative) made, and the need for behavior support being called, or suspensions from school (see graph in chapter 4).

Evaluative Praise Group (EP). This group comprised of one class named 3A which contained eighteen students. This class was taught the same lessons as the group in the behavior descriptive praise group; however, this group only received evaluative praise

such as “good job” or “beautiful picture!” I choose this group called 3A to be a part of the EP group simply due the group's seemingly ‘blind confidence.’ I noticed that most of these students appeared to be very motivated and thought they were great at both subjects. During the study, I also began tracking how often I used an EP statement and began charting to make sure that I was using five or more EP statements during a class. The reason I chose to use five or more EP statements during the class, was to not overwhelm and disrupt the students as well as to make sure that I used a minimum with each class. I paid close attention to my speech to ensure that I was only using EP with this group, being that my experience is using of BDP with all of my classes for the majority of the year.

Behavior Descriptive Praise Group (BDP). The descriptive praise group also contained one class of third grade classes containing nineteen students we named this group 3B. This group was also taught the same lessons as the evaluative praise group, but their praise was only behavior descriptive praise such as “wow, you used a lot of red in your art!” This group was a TDL class. These classes tend to have more students per a classroom, because to allow more English as a Second Language (ESL) support to be provided. My colleague and I chose to have this group be part of the BDP group, because there was a higher percentage of these students who appeared to lack effort and confidence in both art class and physical education classes. The group 3B students appeared to believe in their baseline surveys that they did not think they were good at art or physical education, and many of the students marked down an okay or lower on the survey. I was interested to see what would the impact on the students motivation and

confidence in the art room. Just like with the EP group, I used a minimum of five BDP statements during the course of the fifty-five minute period. I worked to ensure that I was only using BDP statements during the class and that no EP statements were used.

Students art projects. During the course of this four month study, the students created three different art projects. The first project the students worked on was a simple weaving project. This project often begins as very challenging for the third grade students to understand the pattern and how it changes each time you weave. The weaving project is often a favorite of my third grade students, and years after completing this work students will regularly request to complete it again. The second project created was a sarcophagus project where the students studied the ancient Egyptian cultures, and made work based on of this historical art. The last project the students fished was a Super Mario Brothers project, where the students examine images from the video games and create their own world for the characters. Even with the great variety of the projects the students created, I do not believe that this had an impact on the study.

Video recording. During my study, I had a colleague use a video camera and record me teaching both classes. Then after the recording occurred, my colleague and I got together to ensure that I was using enough praise throughout the course of each lesson and spacing out the times when I would use praise. Although video recording took place, it was not used in the analysis of the research. This tool was used to establish that I was using enough praise and spacing it throughout each classes.

Data Analysis Method

The data was analyzed using the mixed methods form of data collection. Student surveys were given at the beginning of the study to gather a baseline of the student input in two different classes. The surveys did not change throughout the course of the study. The survey was presented seven times (three by each teacher conducting the research and once for a baseline) throughout the course of the study, once for a baseline, once for the beginning of the study, once for a midterm, and once at the end. The surveys data was then put into a chart to compare the data from each class and charted.

The student behavior was tracked for two weeks before conducting the research, thus presenting a simple baseline. Then the behavior was charted during the extent of the research and has been charted as well. All of the data has been cross compared to see if the student surveys correlate with the behavior tracking data from each class.

In addition teacher journal was also used to track the behaviors and successes from each day of the study. Each day a I spent five to fifteen minutes quickly writing notes on what occurred for the day. I focused on the behaviors seeing if the behaviors and class climate stayed the same or changed.

Summary

To complete this study, I spent four months collecting data, journaling, tracking student behavior, and charting student surveys. In addition, I had a co-worker video tape me teaching both classes and then provide feedback on how often and the type of praise I was using. I often had to take a step back and ensure that I was using the correct type of praise with the specific group of students. In chapter four, the research will be analyzed

and compared to draw conclusions about the type of praise that has the greatest positive effect on the students.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Collection and Analysis

Overview

This study occurred in an lower socio-economic midwest elementary school. The goal of the action research was to discover if the way educators praised students could increase students intrinsic motivation and allow for less disruptive behavior in the classroom. This study took place over a four month period in two different classes: physical education and art. However the art room will be the main focus of this study. In order to complete the research I used a mixed methods form of research to collect the data.

Several methods were used when collecting data for this study such as: students surveys, teacher journaling, and behavior tracking. Although, I had a colleague completing a similar study during the same time, the results will focus only my research and findings. The goal of this chapter is to answer the question, *what is the impact of behavior descriptive praise and evaluation praise on intrinsic student motivation and behavior?* In order to understand the conclusion, the reader will need to understand the two different types of praise that were used Behavior Descriptive Praise (BDP) and Evaluative Praise (EP).

There are several different types of praise that educators use when attempting to teach and show approval to their students. This action research will focus on two specific types of praise the first is evaluative praise. Evaluative praise is simply when a teacher tells a student, “good job” or “good work.” Evaluative praise is non-specific and is easy

to use, due to several simple statements that are commonly associated with it. Evaluative praise is often vague and the students do not always know what they were praise for, but often are happy that they received praise nonetheless.

The second type of praise used was behavior descriptive praise. Using behavior descriptive praise means, you describe the desired behavior that you want the student to do in a positive way such as, “Carlos has two feet in one square, bubble and bunny tail on.” Behavior descriptive praise informs the rest of the class what the teacher is looking for and will always describe in a positive tone the desired behavior or outcome.

Data was collected from two different third grade classes at “Johnson Elementary” (not real name). The demographics of the classes examined goes as: one of the class had students composed of primarily African American and Hispanic (3A), while the second group was only Hispanic students (3B). Names have been changed to ensure confidentiality of my students and the school where the study took place.

It is important to understand that prior to this study, I had read the article “Five Reasons to Stop Saying ‘Good Job’” by Alfie Kohn (2001). The article changed my teaching practice to adopt behavior descriptive praise with all of my classes, instead of evaluative praise. So preceding to the beginning of this study all of my classes were receiving primarily BDP. The only variable that changed during the course of the study was the praise used, besides that the students were taught the same material in the same way.

Mixed Methods: Data Collection

The mixed methods form of research was used and was modeled similar to completing action research. This method was used as a way to change my teaching practice, and make me better at what I do. Creswell (2014) stated the power of using action research, "...the research contains an action agenda for reform that may changes lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life" (p. 9). The idea that using action research in my mixed methods use of data collection was very appealing with the concept that my research could change my practice for the better.

Baseline Data

For this study baseline data was collected. All baseline data was collected in the end of October 2016 and the students were presented with students surveys, while I completed behavior tracking and teacher journaling for one full week. When the students were given the surveys they were all informed that this was just being used to help me become a better teacher, and that these surveys would not impact their grades. The purpose was to obtain data that was completed soon enough to be able to compare with the data that would come later on. The initial data presented in October made me decide to have the group 3B be a part of the behavior descriptive praise group due to the appearance of the lack of confidence as stated in my journal entry,

(a)s for the groups that I've chosen for the study. The class 3B will participate in the Behavior Descriptive Praise group. The 3B class has little behavior issues, but I am curious to see how their effort and self perception of their art changes or

stays the same with only using behavior descriptive praise. I am curious to see if their perception and/or behavior changes after this study. (10/31/16)

This decision was made in part due to the classes answers to the baseline survey that was presented on 10/31/16. I perceived that this group appeared to lack confidence in art due to their response to the third question asking them if they thought they were good at art. I noticed that on the baseline survey that 53% the class did not feel as though they were good at art (see Table 1). When comparing data from each table, the numbers of total students do change, simply because new students were enrolled or students who changed schools that affected the schools population.

Table 1: Baseline Survey Results Group 3B Behavior Descriptive Praise 10/31/2016

Questions	No 😞	Kind of 😐	Pretty Good 😊	Great 😄
Do you enjoy art?	2 Students 20%	1 Student 6%	2 Students 20%	9 Students 60%
What do you feel your effort is in art class?	2 Students 20%	1 Student 6%	1 Student 6%	7 Students 47%
Do you think you are good at art?	6 Students 40%	2 Students 13%	3 Students 20%	3 Students 20%

The group 3A was selected to be a part of the evaluative praise group after the student surveys were given out in October 2016. This group differed from group 3A, all of the students appeared to be very confident in their art skills whereas only 21% of this group felt they they weren't good at art (see Table 2). This data was taken from the question, "do you think you're good at art," which I noticed that 64% of 3A thought they

were great at art compared to 3B where as only 20% of these students felt they were good at art (see Tables 1 and 2). During this time behavior tracking was being completed, and during this week group 3A did not present any negative behaviors, as stated in my journal this group did show signs of negative behavior, “...(t)he group 3A answered very positively on the baseline survey and also has little behavior issues in this class” (10/25/16). I was interested to explore the idea that using BDP on a group could increase intrinsic motivation and confidence in their art, and how using only EP would impact a group already so confident in art.

Table 2: Baseline Survey Results Group 3A Evaluative Praise 10/25/2016

Questions	No 😞	Kind of 😐	Pretty Good 😊	Great 😄
Do you enjoy art?	0 Students 0%	2 Students 14%	6 Students 42%	6 Students 42%
What do you feel your effort is in art class?	0 Students 0%	3 Students 21%	6 Students 42%	7 Students 50%
Do you think you are good at art?	0 Students 0%	3 Students 21%	2 Students 14%	9 Students 64%

The Different Classes

The classes 3A and 3B were comprised of very different students. In the group 3A there were three students who were part of the Physical and Health Disability (PhD) program at my school. This meant that the students came with an special education assistant to aid the students in their learning or physical challenges when presented in the class. In addition, in the group 3A that 8 of the 23 students had an Individual Education

Plan (IEP) (this is including the PhD students) and in the group 3B only 1 of the 25 students had an IEP. Although group 3A had significantly more IEP's, this did not have an initial impact on the student's behavior, inclusion, or motivation in art class. Often both of the classes enter into art a bit tired (as they point out what emotion they are feeling on their way into art), and these students are tired being that art is their first class of the day.

Survey Results

Group 3A Evaluative Praise. The initial survey results from this group showed that they appeared to be more courageous in art. The initial survey given at the start of this study in February 2017, the results appear to be very similar to the baseline survey given in October (see Table 3). Yet, as the study progressed the second survey showed that more students in 3A appeared to have reduced enjoyment, effort, and confidence in art class. This data was compared to the beginning of the survey were only 12% or less was answered for all of the questions compared to the second survey were the low scores increased to 6-34% of feeling kind of good or less (see Table 4). What was surprising is during the last survey given the scores all increased to the initial baseline data on all levels (see Table 5). I know from my teacher journaling that two students in this group were suddenly taken off their medications and two others became homeless during this study. I am unsure what spiked the confidence levels back to the original results, but this data does show that with group 3A the use of EP did appear to have a slight effect on their confidence half way through the study. It also appeared that the projects did not appear to change the students engagement or confidence in their work. However towards

the end of the study, students seemed to rebound back to their original levels of confidence as observed from the baseline survey. In the student surveys, it appears that using evaluative praise with this group did not have an impact on students motivation (effort), enjoyment, or confidence in art. Nonetheless, through the teacher journaling and behavior tracking data tells a different story that will be presented further on in the chapter.

Table 3: Results from Group 3A Evaluative Praise 3/2/2017

Questions	No 😞	Kind of 😐	Pretty Good 😊	Great 😄
Do you enjoy art?	0 Students 0%	1 Students 7%	2 Students 14%	11 Students 79%
What do you feel your effort is in art class?	1 Student 7%	1 Students 7%	4 Students 29%	8 Students 57%
Do you think you are good at art?	0 Students 0%	2 Students 12%	0 Students 0%	12 Students 86%

Table 4: Results from Group 3A Evaluative Praise 4/28/2017

Questions	No 😞	Kind of 😐	Pretty Good 😊	Great 😄
Do you enjoy art?	1 Student 6%	0 Students 0%	3 Students 17%	13 Students 76%
What do you feel your effort is in art class?	1 Student 6%	2 Students 12%	7 Students 41%	7 Students 41%
Do you think you are good at art?	1 Student 6%	5 Students 29%	1 Students .06%	10 Students 58%

Table 5: Results from Group 3A Evaluative Praise 5/25/2017

Questions	No 😞	Kind of 😐	Pretty Good 😊	Great 😄
Do you enjoy art?	1 Student 7%	2 Students 14%	0 Students 0%	11 Students 78%
What do you feel your effort is in art class?	0 Students 0%	0 Students 0%	8 Students 57%	6 Students 42%
Do you think you are good at art?	0 Students 0%	2 Students 14%	1 Student 7%	11 Students 78%

Group 3B Behavior Descriptive Praise. During the course of the the study I observed that the students from group 3B who lacked confidence (thought they were bad at art) decreased from 27% from (2/24/2017) down to only 5% on the last survey (5/26/2017). Thus giving the appearance that this group was gaining confidence to create more art. In addition, students who felt that their effort in art class none was at 16% on the first survey (2/24/2017) as compared to the last survey were that number dropped to 0% by 5/26/2017. However the amount of students who thought their effort was only kind of good increased from 6% on the baseline survey to 42% on the last survey (5/26/2017). I was surprised with this data, being I had assumed that the students would put forth more effort if they had more behavior descriptive praise, but this appeared to be inaccurate based off of the student surveys alone.

One result that shocked me was that the student enjoyment of the overall subject increased over the course of this study. The baseline survey presented that 16% of students did not enjoy art class compared to only 5% during the last survey. I am aware that this information could change depending on the lesson and medium being taught to the students, which may have changed their opinions. Over all from the student survey it appeared that using BDP did have a slight effect on students confidence and enjoyment of the overall class; however, I also feel teacher journaling express more detailed information of what occurred during the course of the study.

Table 6: Results from Group 3B Behavior Descriptive Praise 2/24/2017

Questions	No 😞	Kind of 😐	Pretty Good 😊	Great 😄
Do you enjoy art?	3 Students 16%	1 Student 5%	3 Student 16%	11 Students 61%
What do you feel your effort is in art class?	3 Students 16%	4 Students 22%	6 Students 33%	3 Students 16%
Do you think you are good at art?	5 Students 27%	1 Student 5%	7 Students 38%	5 Students 27%

Table 7: Results from Group 3B Behavior Descriptive Praise 4/27/2017

Questions	No 😞	Kind of 😐	Pretty Good 😊	Great 😄
Do you enjoy art?	2 Students 10%	1 Student 5%	8 Student 42%	8 Students 42%
What do you feel your effort is in art class?	2 Students 10%	4 Students 21%	6 Students 31%	7 Students 36%
Do you think you are good at art?	3 Students 15%	3 Students 25%	10 Students 52%	3 Students 15%

Table 8: Results from Group 3B Behavior Descriptive Praise 5/26/2017

Questions	No 😞	Kind of 😐	Pretty Good 😊	Great 😄
Do you enjoy art?	1 Student 5%	4 Students 21%	5 Students 26%	9 Students 92%
What do you feel your effort is in art class?	0 Students 0%	8 Students 42%	7 Students 36%	4 Students 21%
Do you think you are good at art?	1 Student 5%	4 Students 21%	11 Students 57%	3 Students 15%

Accuracy of the student surveys was made questionable by around three students in the group 3B. I observed during the time I would be giving the surveys that two or three students who sat near each other would often giggle during the time they were filling out the surveys. Also these students never put their names on their surveys. Due to

all of this, it makes me question the honesty of those three students when marking all of the lowest scores they could. I even had one survey where I could clearly see that they planned on giving themselves a higher score, but then you can see the erased pencil marks and changing their mind to a much lower score. Instead I think that I would interview only a hand full of students from each class to gain more accurate data.

Teacher Journal

Group 3A Evaluative Praise. During the four months that this study took place, I would write a paragraph or two immediately after class about the how each lesson went, how the class climate felt, and if a specific behavior occurred then who and what happened. Although 3A appeared to have more confidence, this group also displayed more behavior issues from the beginning, the behaviors also were fairly easy to manage. I even wrote in one of my first journal entries during the study, “(t)his group already has a few high flyers in it, so I am curious to see what the impact of this study will be on the kids” (3/9/2017). It must be illustrated that during the first day of my teacher journal I remarked that the confidence group 3A appeared to have in creating their own art see journal entry, “(t)oday, I gave the survey to 3A. This group appears to have more confidence in art. I also had the students working on weaving, but this was their second day of this art. Last time the students were pretty good at helping each other complete their work and teaching. . .” (3/2/2017).

During the halfway point of this study, I began to see more signs of frustration with the students and lack of community. This group was working on a weaving project, which can prove to be very challenging to some students, so I often encourage students to

help each other. As the weaving project progressed, I detected that the students became more frustrated, lacked motivation to help each other or show encouragement. In my journal entry on April 12, I wrote about two specific students struggling where they had not struggled nearly as much as before, 'J' began swearing out of frustration (student's are referred to by the letter of their first name to protect their identities in my journal entries). "J swore twice in class, which is not characteristic of him. M needed several reminders to stay on task, and keep his body under control" (4/12/2017).

The most noticeable part of journaling for group 3A was that the class climate continued to decrease, where there appeared to be a lack of community. With this group, it became a challenge to teach doing direct instruction, due to constant shout outs and other inappropriate interruptions. I wrote during the last three classes, how I looked forward to being able to use BDP with this group like I had done during the beginning of the school year. To me it was obvious that the students did not respond well to the use of evaluative praise and often spoke out with confusion. Through the course of the action research, I began to observe that class atmosphere appeared to struggle and the students were often getting upset with each other and unwilling to help one another, "I had two kids walk out of class, one (M) is not on his meds at the moment and J is currently HHM (homeless/highly mobile). These two often struggle in art class, but it appears that they are struggling more since the increase of evaluative praise (4/14/2017). I also begun to see the confusion that was occurring due to using EP with this group,

I noticed that right away the student that heard good job smiled, but it did not change any of the other students behavior. Normally, when I would use BDP

the other students would change their behavior, but this time no one did. I noticed, then other students who were leaning were saying “I was doing my job”, but they did not understand that I was looking for them to not be leaning on the table.

Also my student M (who’s been off his meds) came only during the last five minutes of class. Since M was gone, J had no one to show off for. But then today with using EP another student M2 began showing signs of disruption and arguing with his peers. This caused C, and T to verbally argue with him. Also since I was using EP I noticed that when I was complimenting tables that were doing their jobs, the others seemed to be frustrated by not knowing why the others received compliments. (4/19/2017)

Although the students have been struggling with the use of EP, the students still appear to be happy when praise is given to them, even when they are unsure of the reason why I am praising them. This is similar to what Kohn (2001) mentioned where it seems to have made these students almost “praise junkies.” Where even if they don’t know why someone is being praised, they desperately desire to be given the same validation even if it does not change their behavior.

The use of the EP would often change the climate of the class, the students would be excited and ready to learn art, but when I would begin using the EP statements, the whole class mood would appear to change,

...(r)ight away I used three EP statements, and this made the mood of the class feel off. The students struggled to listen and needed several reminders. Even some of my better behaved students were struggling to follow directions. (4/21/2017)

I began seeing that students were beginning to struggle to stay focused during the first ten minutes of class and listen to the directions after the EP was given. There were even times when I would complement a student for walking in and sitting down quietly and I would hear the other students responses when they thought they should have received praise as well. The next journal entry is a prime example of the frustration experienced by the students for not understanding what I was praising a student on,

I keep hearing with this class how when I tell the class “M--- is doing their job” or “good job W---”, I keep hearing other kids complaining about the lack of acknowledgement. I quickly went through the survey’s that this class completed as a mid-term survey and I noticed that the ‘blind’ confidence that this group had, appears to be wavering. I see that I this time around some students put themselves at the lowest score, which was untrue of this class prior to this study.

I still have two main ‘high flyers’ in this class, but I have noticed that it has become more and more challenging to get the class to quiet down and listen to directions when they only praise they hear is “good job’ or something else that’s nonspecific. (4/28/2017)

Using only EP became quite a test to the point were I contemplated ending the study early in the hopes to build more positive community into this class through the use of BDP. Normally in my teaching I use more BDP, and I was shocked to see how much more challenging this group became during the course of the action research even with having the exact same projects taught at the same times in the same ways. I felt as though using EP eliminated my positive community I had built in the first half of the school year,

This group was better today. J was absent, or just never made it to class so SAT (behavior support) support was called. M appears to be on his meds, so he needed less redirection. The kids came down in overall a better spirit, but there was still a high amount of re-directions needed. Again I used at least 5 EP statements during this class. I did see some behavior change, but not as much as it would when I would use BDP in the beginning of the year. I am considering ending this study right before memorial day weekend, but I may change it and use some BDP during the last two weeks of school (just to see if there are any changes during a challenging time to teach). (5/10/2017).

By the end of this study, this group was very challenging to teach and get them to walk into the art room quietly and calmly. When I reflected on my journaling, it was obvious that these students struggled with having only EP presented to them. Often the students were confused about who I praised and why, and I watched the class climate reduce to a negative tone. Although their surveys did not reflect the frustration of class, the journaling captured the emotions of the group more vividly than the surveys.

Group 3B Behavior Descriptive Praise. In the beginning, I observed that this group appeared to be less confident and intrinsically motivated to complete tasks in art class. I wondered that if I were to be more direct with our behavior descriptive praise if this could cause for more effort and motivation to be put forth in art class. In the second month of the study, I wrote about how this group appeared to lack confidence in their art, “(y)esterday I had the class 3B again. I was surprised to see how many of these students appear to lack confidence and joy in art. For the lesson today, I had zero behavior issues”

(3/1/2017). This lack of confidence was surprising, being this group had two full months (approximately eight classes) of BDP, and it had yet to show an impact on the students confidence. This lack of confidence was also observed again about a week later.

Although this group appears to be less confident than the EP group, the class climate appeared to be stronger where the students were more willing to help each other during the harder parts of the art projects. I even observed this in my journaling, “(t)oday the students . . . finished their weavings. This can be a challenging task, but they were very good about helping each other to finish when needed” (3/29/2017). I noticed through my journaling that there were several days where I record how the students were willing to encourage and help each other, this was a difference in comparison to the group 3A.

Not only did the BDP group appear more willing to help each other, but it appeared that using these statements informed the class what I was looking for more clearly in their projects. Behavior descriptive praise showed the class the expectations as stated here,

During the art class, I used behavior descriptive praise approximately 10 times. I would say things like “Wow, J is using the same colors that the ancient Egyptians used!” and then I noticed that the students who were using the wrong colors suddenly changed to make theirs the correct colors. I also used BDP to encourage students to be creative such as: “A is making his sarcophagus silly with buggers” or “K made his sarcophagus with a skull face.” By saying this in a positive tone appeared to give students permission to be creative where I saw

more students adding bows and eyelashes and turning making their faces ghosts. I also notice that the general mood of the class appears to be positive. (4/20/2017)

Not only did the students begin to understand what the expectations were during the third month of the study. Using the BDP statements made the expectations of the projects extremely clear and I would soon see other students following the directions of the praise I presented to another student first.

By the last month of the study, the students appeared to have more creative freedom by adding things that I did not have on my teacher sample such as eye lashes and buggers. When I began seeing the students adding these extra details that exuded confidence in the students creative ability and not needing to make their art look exactly like my sample. I saw this slight surge of confidence on May 4, "I've noticed that it appears that the students are having more confidence in their work, but a lot of them still feel very unsure" (5/4/2017).

During the last two journal entries I observed that not only did the students appear to have more confidence, but any behavior issues appeared to dissolve, "(t)his group was already a pretty well behaved group, but I've noticed that I need to do even less corrections while using BDP" (4/27/2017). Not only did the behaviors appear to resolve themselves better, the students effort appeared to increase as stated here, "(t)his group worked very hard. I've noticed what when I used one of my BDP statements that other students often to begin modeling the same behavior. This class always had little behavior problems, but it appears the behavior has gotten even better" (5/18/2017). Overall it arose through my journaling that the students motivation increased and negative behaviors

decreased. The class climate appeared not to be an issue with students offering to help and encourage each other. Through the journal entries, I felt that the behavior tracking data showed pretty similar results with the groups receiving BDP and EP.

Behavior Tracking Data

Behavior tracking was completed every day on a post-it note and then I would transfer the data into my teacher journal. Each day I would write out R for redirection, B for break, S for behavior support being called, P+ for a positive phone call home, and P - for a negative phone call home. Under each of these simple letters, I would simply tally how often I would have to redirect a student or the class or the amount of breaks taken, of whatever else what needed to be tallied. Thus this is where and how the data was collected and graphed for each of the groups.

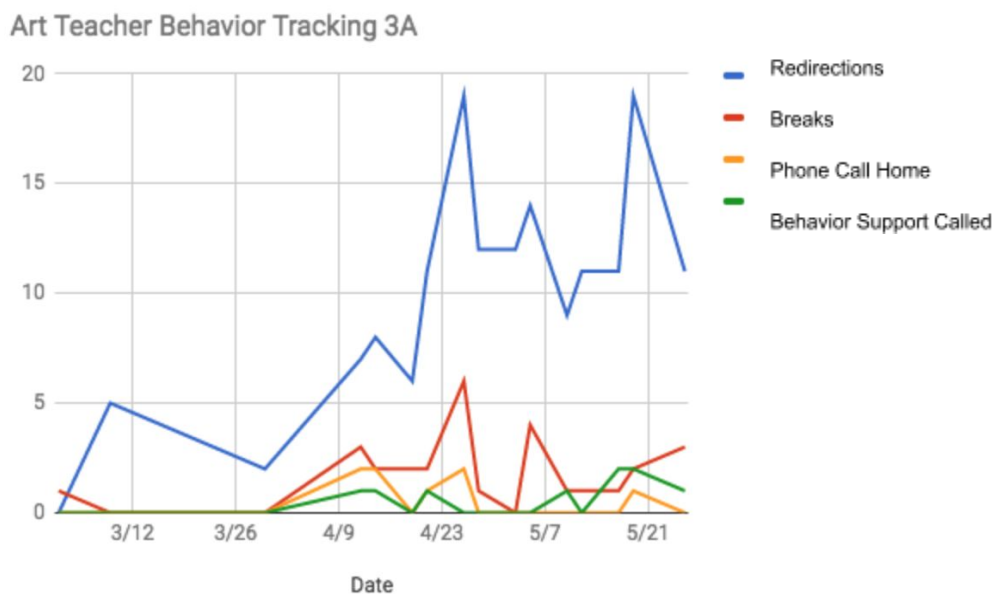
Group 3A Evaluative Praise. Graph 3A will show the duration of the students behavior and the increase in students needing to be redirected, breaks. It appears that during the first month of the study when the students are getting used to only hearing evaluative praise, that the climate and behavior still appears to be consistent. However there is a distinct spike in behaviors, which increase in the beginning of April (2017) and appear to be fairly consistent. This group also had consistent use of BDP until the end of January, when this study began. Then I changed from using primarily BDP with all of my classes, to using only EP in this class. I believe that the first month shows the transition time of the students getting used to this new type of praise.

The graph 3A also shows that behavior peaked twice during end of April of 2017 and middle of May to where students were needing eighteen redirections per a fifty-five

minute class. Along with having an increased amount of redirections, and that the need for students to take breaks, have phone calls home made, and have behavior support come to the art room increased. It also must be noted that this group of students had more behavior issues, but during the beginning of the study, the negative behaviors were minor and tracking not much above the other groups redirection with an average of five or less. Yet, after the study began, it develops that the use of evaluative praise caused or allowed more negative behavior to occur.

It was observed through the initial data shows that group 3A (EP) did not have many behavior issues prior to the beginning of this study, but there was still a higher amount of redirections and break compared to group 3B. The increase in the amount of negative behaviors correlates with the negative classroom climate and the use of EP.

Graph 1: Behavior Tracking for Group 3A

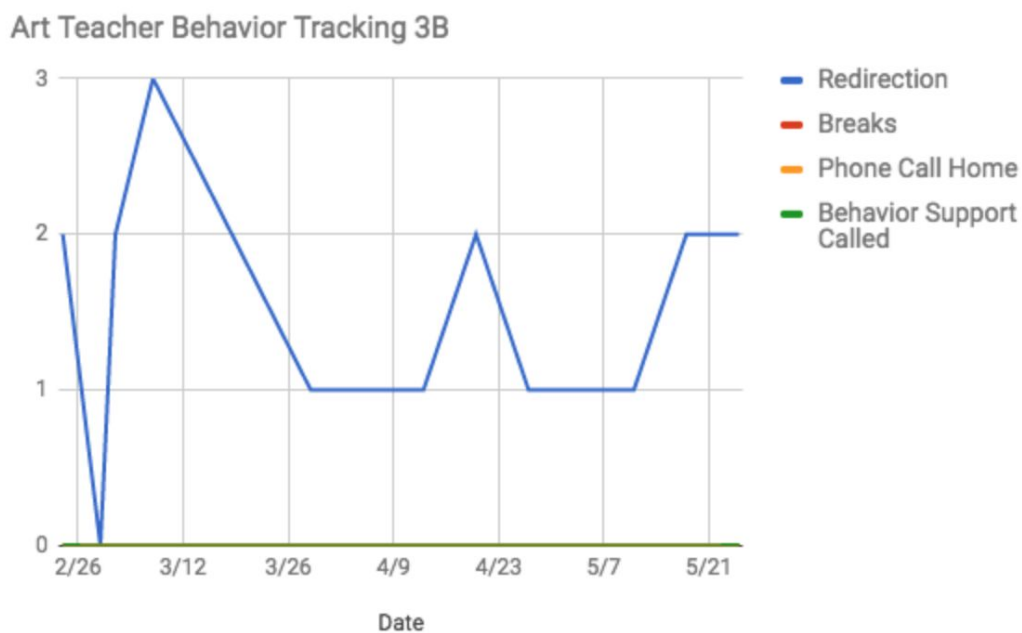


Group 3B Behavior Descriptive Praise. In the graph 2 the group 3B the redirections, breaks, phone calls home, and behavior support called all appear to be very consistent. This group often had little behaviors prior to this research beginning. My guess is that from the beginning of the school year, these students had consistent BDP used with them.

It must be noted that in graph 3B that only redirection was used, and there was no breaks, phone calls home, or behavior support needed with this group. It also must be known that this group often had little behavior issues, so that lack of behavior was not a surprise.

In addition, this group appears to have more class community and willingness to help each other. I believe that this is shown through the behavior tracking where there were few student conflicts and the students learned to persevere through the use of BDP.

Graph 2: Behavior Tracking for Group 3B



Comparing data from each group. For me the most striking data came from my teacher journal and the behavior tracking I noticed that I would write things in my journal like, “I can’t wait to be done with this, so I can use BDP on the EP group” (5/25/2017). I also found that the classclimate was greatly affected by the way the praise was given, and I was not expecting the entire class climate to change this significantly.

Impact on Other Classes

While completing this study and seeing the positive effects that BDP had on students and the appeared negative effects of using EP, I began using BDP with all of my classes. I noticed that when I wanted students to line up in a straight line, I would describe in a positive tone what a specific student was doing and quickly most students who were off task would soon do what I had just described.

When I was teaching a kindergarten class in the fall of 2017 I had a little boy “Ron” (not his real name) hold up his picture and say, “Ms. Stacie, do you like it?” and my reply was to describe his art back to him in a positive way so I said, “Wow, you sure used a lot of red, is that your favorite color?” I was amazed to see “Ron’s” face grow to huge grin that I observed his work and choose to describe and ask him about it. He then quickly informed me that red was his favorite color. I perceived that when I began describing art to the students when they would ask me if I liked it, that it appeared to give them more self reassurance instead of just telling them I liked it. The students observed that I was really examining their work and providing individual feedback. From giving the students this type of feedback in all of my other classes, I have seen students no

longer fearful of making mistakes and taking pride in their work without the constant need for evaluative praise.

Summary

This chapter focused on analyzing and interpreting the results from the action research completed. In the end, I do feel as though my study did answer my research question *what is the impact of behavior descriptive praise and evaluation praise on intrinsic student motivation and behavior?* Although the results varied greatly from what I predicted would happen, I still feel as though I have the results that show the positive benefits on using behavior descriptive praise in the art room. I also was able to observe the negative effects of using evaluative praise and seeing how this type of praise destroyed class community and aided in student confusion.

I feel strongly about the use of praise in the classroom to help motivate students and assist in their confidence. After completing this capstone projects action research I use more BDP in the art room and worked hard to eliminate the use of EP. I have seen my students grow and be less afraid to try new and challenging projects in art.

The following chapter will conclude the research completed in this action research and will examine and connect the research from chapter two. In addition, chapter five will discuss the hypothesis and the challenges faced during the course of this four month action research study in the art room.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Introduction

As an elementary art teacher, it is my belief that everyone can create art. I am often quoted telling my students, “if you’re not making mistakes in art, you’re not doing it right!” I want all my students to feel motivated to try new things and not be fearful of failure. I decided to attempt to build community, reduce negative behavior, and increase intrinsic motivation by seeing if something as simple as how we praise our students could really have an impact on how they view themselves in the art room. This led me to my question of *what is the impact of behavior descriptive praise and evaluation praise on intrinsic student motivation and behavior?*

Chapter five will compare my data from chapter two’s literature review to fully understand if my research had the predicted outcome. During this chapter I will also explore how this study has impacted my teaching practice. This chapter will also examine the outcome of the students if they really did become more intrinsically motivated and reduced behavior issues from a specific type of praise.

Connections with Literature Review and Major Findings

I will begin with defining the different types of praise I used to complete my research. First I had one group who received only Evaluative Praise (EP) which is defined as praising students with simple, non-descriptive statements such as “good job” or “good work.” I also used Behavior Descriptive Praise (BDP) which is defined as

describing to the student the desired behavior or outcome in a positive tone, such as “Johnny is sitting on the floor criss cross applesauce.” Thus in chapter two I focused on exploring how other researchers found positive and negative impacts of both of these types of praise, which I then compared in my own research.

When writing chapter two I analyzed the different types of praise, mindsets, behavior and student motivation. Through my research I discovered that using BDP had a positive impact on my students. While in comparison I learned that using only EP caused frustration and confusion in my students. The area of my research that I focused the most on was what how evaluative praise and behavior descriptive praise impacted students. I explored the concepts from Carol Dweck on “mindsets” and Alfie Kohn on how the use of EP negatively impacted students.

Before completing my research I knew that using praise with students often had positive outcomes, but I was unaware of the impacts of the different types of praise. I still remember one day during my student teacher experience where my cooperating teacher and I were struggling with negative behaviors of a second grade class. I saw that my cooperating teacher was constantly focusing on correcting negative behaviors, and it appeared that when he did this, other students would soon follow in presenting the same negative behaviors. So I asked my cooperating teacher if I could try something different, the next time we had this second grade class I ignored as much of the negative behavior as I could and focused only on the positive things and praised them. Very quickly most of the unwanted behaviors stopped and the students soon were striving to be praised. This

showed me the power praise can have when managing a classroom, but little did I know that certain types of praise were more effective than others.

Only after enrolling in the course “Classroom Management that Builds Community” did I begin to question the different types of praise from reading the article “Five Reasons to Stop Saying ‘Good Job’” by Alfie Kohn (2001). The article by Kohn really made me question what praise was the best to use with students. Thus with reading this article, it was very clear to me how the students in group 3A began to desire praise, even when they did not know why they earned it. This group's behavior decreased from constantly using evaluative praise.

Through my research, I learned that my findings strongly correlated with the results of my literature review. I learned that through the correct use of praise, the students from group 3B (BDP) appeared to think they became better at art, while with the group 3A (EP) they presented more unwanted behaviors and struggled to have a positive class community.

I also observed how the use of praise was able to help increase and even decrease motivation and community in the classroom, depending of the type of praise received. The students in group 3B appeared to enjoy art class more as the study went on, and appeared to gain some confidence. I remember when I was teaching my third grade students about ancient Egypt and the students were creating a paper sarcophagus for their art project, I witnessed several students becoming more creative and even silly in their projects when receiving BDP, as compared to students who received EP. It appeared that group 3AB (EP) was not afraid of failure or to make their art their own. This was very

similar to Dweck's (2008) finding that students who have a growth mindset are not fearful to try new things, but focus on the effort they put into their work instead of the final product. This was clearly viewed by seeing group 3B not being afraid to make their work their own. On the contrary to 3A, where these students only received EP which I believe caused them to remain in a fixed mindset and the belief that their work had to look perfect.

When witnessing these great gains from group 3B (BDP), I was also experiencing a decline in behavior and class community in group 3A (EP). I found this very interesting, because the only thing that was different with these two groups was the way they were praised. Group 3A the students had much more behavior issues, especially as the study went on. I was surprised to see how fast the class community appeared to decline from the use of EP.

Implications of Results

There are several implications that this study had on both classes; first was the class community, then the confidence, and how students were willing to try new things. My research aligned with my literature review, being that I clearly observed the positive outcome of using behavior descriptive praise and the negative adversaries from using evaluative praise.

When reflecting on how the class community/climate changed for both classes during the course of the action research study I observed two main factors, first, group 3A (EP) climate changed to more of a negative community, whereas; group 3B (BDP) climate increased and become more positive. I noticed through my journaling how the

students (in group 3A) would often feel confused about why their peers were being praised and they were not. By praising students with just EP created frustration about why they were not also receiving the positive feedback. The students in group 3A needed significantly more redirections, phone call homes, breaks, and behavior support than group 3B. Initially the data showed that this group had a slightly higher amount of behavior issues (through behavior tracking) than the other group, however; about half way through the study there was a drastic increase in the amount of negative behaviors displayed. This led me to conclude that the use of evaluative praise created a negative decline in classroom community/climate.

Behaviors and community were not the only variable that changed during the course of this study, the students confidence and creativity also was impacted by the type of praise given. During the course of this study, the students were given student surveys to help track their effort, enjoyment, and confidence in art. To gauge confidence the students were simply asked, “do you think you’re good at art?” This questions allowed to me to simply view how the students viewed themselves. It appeared that the group 3A slowly began to feel that they were not as good at art.

Although group 3A appeared to lack some confidence during the course of this study, group 3B appeared to struggle with their own confidence during the entire time of this study. Despite this, the students from 3B slowly became slightly more confident throughout the course of taking their student surveys. I observed mostly that their confidence came from being more willing to take risks when creating their art. Through the use of behavior descriptive praise, I was able to encourage students to try new art

techniques and be less fearful of making an art piece that was truly their own. By the end of the study, group 3B was creating art that was more individualized to each student, instead of attempted to make theirs just like the teacher sample (more like 3A).

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. I found that using student surveys is something that I would change how they were presented in the future. First I did paper copies of the student surveys (see appendix A), where this ended up being a lot of paper to keep track of. If I were to use surveys again, I would use an online resource to collect and analyze the data faster. Also, I found myself questioning the accuracy of the student surveys from group 3B, I witnessed that I would hear students giggling during the second and third times they were given the surveys. The students that were giggling sat next to each other, and I even saw one survey where the student initially had given himself a higher score, but then erased the answers and gave himself the lowest score (see Appendix B). I think that this occurred because when I began giving the surveys I would preface all the students and explain that this was to help me be a better teacher and it would not hurt their grades. Only when I gave the last student survey from group 3B and I stressed the importance of honesty did I see less with low scores and the erasing and changing their answers.

Another challenge to completing this study was ensuring that I was using enough praise. I found that I had to use a post-it note to make sure that I was using five EP statements or BDP statements in the correct classes. I also struggled to use only EP statements, especially when I would hear the students frustration with not understanding

why a certain student received praise. I noticed that when I began seeing the positive effects of using BDP, then I began using these statements with all of my other classes. This made it even more challenging to ensure that I was only using EP with group 3A.

My colleague and I were completing very similar studies on using praise in the classroom during the same time. Initially I had planned on cross-comparing data from each of our classes. However, as the study progressed and I realized that I could not control all of the different variables from her class, I later decided that it was best to only focus on the facts from my classes. Thus, all of the data presented was from my class alone.

Lastly, even though I had a colleague video tape me with both groups 3A and 3B, I did not include the results in this study. The video recording ended up just being a resource for me to ensure that I was using the correct type of praise, that I was spacing the praise out during the whole duration of the class, and that I used a praise statement five times or more. I did not see these findings to have any real impact on the study, just more used to help me with praising the students.

Recommendations

This action research project informed me of the importance of using behavior descriptive praise with all of my students. When using BDP it allowed for clarity for what the expected behavior was for all students. BDP helped to give students confidence and expressed a growth mindset. I would fully recommend that educators begin to examine what type of praise they are providing their students with. I believe that using BDP will create clear expectations for students across all contents being taught.

Even though using praise with students is often looked upon highly, I think that the type of praise used can provide clear instructions and create a community of active learners who are not fearful of failure.

Use of Results

In the end, I was able to see how much praise can effect a class. After completing this study, I have worked hard to use only behavior descriptive praise when I provide students with praise. I have seen the results first hand how using BDP can impact a students confidence and motivation. I have also observed how using only EP can lead to confusion, frustration, and diminish class community.

In addition, I have already begun using this new found knowledge when mentoring first year teachers. At my school, my specialist team often has one or two new members on it, which I help to mentor. I have already found myself encouraging the teachers I am mentoring to use behavior descriptive praise with their students instead of just stating who is doing their jobs. I believe that this helps to show new teachers how to clearly state what their expectations are.

Lastly, when I informed my principal of my action research that I was completing with our third grade students, she was very excited about the study. She even talked with me about the possibility of having our staff learn new and easy to use classroom management strategies. Thus more than likely this year I will lead professional development meeting with our staff around the findings that were discovered from this study.

Summary

This capstone project was based on the question *what is the impact of behavior descriptive praise and evaluation praise on intrinsic student motivation and behavior?* I found that my research completed in chapter two proved to be correct that using behavior descriptive praise will have a positive impact on student motivation and behavior.

I will continue to use behavior descriptive praise throughout my teaching and I have even begun to encourage colleagues to do the same. I was stunned when completing my research and seeing the effects of using the two different types of praise.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Sample student survey from group 3A





Name: _____
Date: 4-28-17
Class Code: 3A

Third Grade Art Class Survey




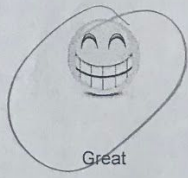
1. Do you enjoy art class?

			
No	Kind of	Pretty good	Great

2. What do you feel your effort is in art class?

			
None	Okay	Pretty good	Great

3. Do you think you are good at art?





			
No	Kind of	Pretty good	Great

APPENDIX B: Student survey from 3B where student changed their answer





Name: _____
Date: 2.24.17
Class Code: 3B

Third Grade Art Class Survey





1. Do you enjoy art class?

			
<input checked="" type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Kind of	<input type="radio"/> Pretty good	<input type="radio"/> Great

2. What do you feel your effort is in art class?

			
<input checked="" type="radio"/> None	<input type="radio"/> Okay	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Pretty good	<input type="radio"/> Great

3. Do you think you are good at art?

			
<input checked="" type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Kind of	<input type="radio"/> Pretty good	<input type="radio"/> Great