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The importance of establishing positive behavior supports and classroom community to foster successful transitions throughout diverse school settings

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THE IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS AND CLASSROOM COMMUNITY TO FOSTER SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS THROUGHOUT DIVERSE SCHOOL SETTINGS

By
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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my mother and father,
Cecilia and Robert Tormollan.

I can never express enough thanks for every opportunity you have afforded me.
I love you both so much!

Acknowledgments

I would like to express appreciation and gratitude to my college professors who helped guide me through this entire thesis process, as well as my family and loved ones who supported me throughout the entirety of my collegiate career

Abstract

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THE IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS AND CLASSROOM COMMUNITY TO FOSTER SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS THROUGHOUT DIVERSE SCHOOL SETTINGS

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The purpose of this study was to explore how positive behavior supports and a classroom community would foster positive learning experiences throughout many diverse school settings. To promote classroom community, pillars of character education were addressed were introduced within the classroom, while multiple behavior support systems were introduced simultaneously. This study was conducted over a sixteen week period in a regular education kindergarten classroom and second and third grade resource room. The idea was to provide students, both in a regular and special education setting with means of positive behavior supports in order to aid in transition periods in the classroom and between rooms.

Data suggests that students respond positively when offered behavior supports, and are more likely to perform as a team, providing a community feeling within the class. This study explores multiple means of support and strategies for fostering transitions throughout a school day. The study provides supportive research and data pertaining to the necessity of supporting students through transition periods, research strategies, data collection and suggestions for further and continued classroom research and implementation.

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Chapter One

Introduction to Thesis Study

Introduction

It is a quiet morning in a special education classroom. The day begins the same as any other and the children are privy to the daily routine; the class is unassuming. As the students sit in the classroom in which they spend most of their time, the routine is what some would like to call typical. The children sit quietly, they work on their assignments and they continue as many classes would. They are reinforced for their good behaviors and their undesired behaviors are quickly corrected. Although they have been made aware of the deal daily routine, there is room for interpretation. On this particular day, the teacher has told the children they need to change the plan, and she instructs them to put their work away; the schedule has changed. Freddy has not had enough time to finish the assignment and cannot cope with the change. Yelling and whining begins, the child begins to perseverate on the fact that he has not finished and cannot move on without first finishing the assignment.

The child has settled down, and it is now time to go to music class. This particular student does not like music class. Although the child has settled down from the change in assignments, the change in setting has now caused concern for a different reason. The child does not find music appealing, the class has a lot of down time, and the day has already been a bit hectic. Upon sitting in music class, the Freddy is suddenly off track; he is bored with the task and cannot control the impulse to act out. The music teacher does not catch the behavior before it escalates even further. The student is now having a

"meltdown," is off task, and becoming aggressive toward himself.

Behavior like this is not uncommon for students with special needs, and a less intense version is often visible in young and inexperienced students. Acting out and defiance are means of expressing unease with a situation. Change is a hard concept to deal with, and both dynamics of students often do not know how to express concerns and issues properly. Often times, during a school day, the most confusing and difficult times are periods of transition between or among activities, classrooms or settings. California University (2003) study states that:

...in most cases, changes in an individual's life are considered

natural and good. But they can be difficult as well, upsetting that which we

know and have become accustomed to... Difficulties in adjusting to school

transitions heighten the potential for developing more serious problems.

... prevention literature focuses on protective factors as well as the

current notion that life transitions may be overlooked opportunities to help

adolescents thrive. It is a call to recognize school transitions as important

life events and to promote the development of preventive interventions

during these periods.

Transitions are defined as the movement from "one state of

certainty to another with a period of uncertainty in between (Schilling,

Snow and Schinke, 1988, p.2). What happens during and because of this

period of uncertainty is important to applied researchers and

preventionists...

For more than two decades, researchers have studied how the

social environment contributes to the development of psychosocial,

psychiatric or physical disorders... Their work links life changes and the

resulting demands for readjusting to stress...

Researchers and preventionists have... enriched their

understanding of the development of problem behaviors by focusing on

children's resilience, or the successful adaptation to stress and adversity...

Effective coping is a resilient response to stress, functioning both

to solve problems and manage emotional trauma. A goal of prevention is

to overcome stressful life events and turn them into learning experiences,

rather than having them trigger a crisis... (p.14).

In order to provide positive experiences during these times, teachers need to

provide their students with coping strategies that will allow their students to feel

comfortable enough to be successful. By doing so, these "crisis" situations will become

less frequent, less intense, and possibly diminish completely. A positive social

environment allows for more successful growth and development. Coping strategies,

behavior supports and classroom community can help create the most beneficial

transition periods for all students.

Purpose Statement:

As in this child's day, during a typical school day, a student's environment is

constantly changing, and often times, it is consistently inconsistent. The ever changing

environment allows for interpretations of rules, expectations, and appropriate behaviors

for all students. How than, do these changes influence students, more specifically young

students and students with special needs? Students are constantly making their way

through changing school environments, but how influential are external circumstances, on the internalization of emotions during this time? How does the environment impact each individual student, and more importantly, how can the environment be structured so that transition periods become easier for all students, especially those with special needs? During the school day, a child's environment is constantly changing, between assignments, activities, classrooms, and teachers; with the changes in environment, comes change in expectations, rules, regulations, and teaching strategies. How do student with young students and students with special needs cope during these changing times, how do they navigate the multiple school settings they are faced with every day? Most importantly, how can a teacher provide means of fostering more successful transitions? Research suggests that students with special needs struggle during these times, because change and a lack of structured environment, can be cause for chaos. Providing students with a structured, sort of level playing field can minimize what is changing, and keep expectations clear. Providing students with positive environments and systematic coping strategies can help empower students.

This study is being conducted in order to accumulate qualitative data on how young students and students with special needs navigate diverse school settings. The purpose is to describe how students transition from one activity to another, within activities, and changing environments, both positively and negatively; and the importance of different coping strategies and behavior supports during these times. The objective is to find triggers in the environment that support positive and desirable behaviors, and the triggers that create difficult transitions that lead to outbursts of many kinds. Data will be collected to find out how these students can be most successful, and which environments

should be avoided or altered. It will also be important to identify the different environments and settings, and how they influence student behavior.

Research suggests that, "Interventions to enable successful transitions make a significant difference in how motivationally ready and able youngsters are to benefit from schooling," (California University 2003, p.16). By fostering positive transition experiences, students are more likely to be motivated in the activities immediately preceding and following a transitional period. "Berliner 1993, says that transitions are times of "heightened risk," in combination with a time to "develop and use effective coping skills." She continues in stating that with positive supports in place, a child is more likely to succeed and less likely to face "risks," (p. 15).

This thesis is relevant to the field of regular and special education because it will give insight into the many daily transitions a student faces while navigating their school routine, but more importantly the positive and negative influences that are detrimental to the child's performance. By observing strategies that are used to manage the daily schedule, the research will provide a closer glimpse at what strategies seem to better support a least restrictive environment, and which provide leeway for the child to regress and withdraw. By assessing the behaviors of students with disabilities, a teacher will be able to get a better understanding of what is in the best interest of each individual student.

Statement of Research Problem and Question:

For many students, including young students and students with special needs, including any disability that inhibits a student's ability to cope; the many different tasks, atmospheres, and teaching styles provide times of multiple transitions and periods of uncertainty. The inability to cope during these periods of uncertainty, make it difficult for

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these students to navigate the various contexts a school day provides. What fosters the specific behaviors during these time periods is what seems to be the key in whether or not it will be a successful transition, or a time of loss and withdrawal. With the freedom from consistency and structure, many students with disabilities and young students become lost in the many transitions throughout a day; therefore, there is a need to study how to provide a classroom setting that fosters positive coping skills for students.

From my experience in a special education classroom, working with students who are diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum, and Behavioral Disorders, I have noticed an extreme need to manage the way in which students cope with the ever changing school environment. Often times, these particular students have trouble transitioning from one activity to another, or one setting to another, without proper notifications or time allowance. When this occurs, students who were currently on track, seemingly regress into tangents or tantrums that disallow the ability to successfully accomplish the next task at hand. I have witnessed many different strategies, most of which are based on a token economy, but there seems to be something lacking. Also, after working in and observing multiple kindergarten classroom settings, it has become evident that this is a similar trend with young and inexperienced students. The newness of schooling and the maturation process at this age often seem a difficult task without proper behavior supports and coping strategies. Similarly to my experience in special needs classrooms, it seems that both groups of students often fall off task and disassociate these transition times from the regular rules and expectations throughout the typical classroom times.

The research question and topic, has led to the formation of further questions and more specific cause and effect of change a student faces during the multiple changing

environments of a school day. Upon further research and observation, I would like to know how a teacher can provide students with ample time to prepare for the multiple school settings they will face every day. Is it important to remind students every day that they will be transitioning through diverse settings? When is a good time to introduce students to new settings, and activities, and how can you provide buffers to aid in a positive experience? What are the major differences among the environments children are a part of within a school setting every day? What are some general strategies that can be used in multiple classroom settings to serve any student who struggles during these times?

The Story of the Question:

During my senior year of high school, I was accepted into the Community Action Program. In my hometown of Toms River, the local high schools offer this program to students who feel they may one day wish to enter the field of teaching. You take classes in the morning and at 10:30am; you leave to go to your designated elementary school. For me, the assignment was my alma mater. I went and met with the principal, who was in his first year as an assistant principal, my last year in the school. We had a meeting, and the school year was soon underway. The first day walking through those doors was an experience I could never have fathomed. I was on the other side. I was not a student, rather, a perspective teacher. The once, "big" school, suddenly seemed so tiny and quiet. As I walked the halls on the first day of my assignment, I was passing former classrooms, but even more interesting, former teachers. "Hello Bailey," "Oh my goodness, you are so grown-up," "Welcome back," I heard from a few of them. I was not sure if the recognition was a good sign or a bad sign, what type of impression did I leave on these

people that they still remember? Have I not changed in six years? At this point, all I had hoped was that the impression was a good one, because at this point, my former teachers were becoming perspective colleagues. I rounded the corner to a classroom I had never been in, with a teacher I did not know, and children unlike any I had ever worked with. I had requested to be in a special education classroom, and that is precisely what I was given. "The only special education classes we offer here," the principal said, "is an Autistic self-contained classroom." I had never worked with anyone with Autism, so I accepted the challenge as something new.

I walked into the classroom, shook hands with the teacher and three paraprofessionals, look at the children and felt myself freeze in place. One little boy was screaming louder than I had ever heard a boy his size scream. Another little boy was throwing Lego's, one little girl was rocking in her seat, flapping her left hand, while doing a worksheet with another. There was one little girl using something I had never seen, to explain to the teacher that she wanted to go in the wagon, one little boy doing a craft project, and in the midst of the chaos, another little boy sitting on a beanbag reading a book. "HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE," is all I could think to myself. How do these children all function cohesively, and how is it that the teachers are in control? The teacher told me they had five minutes before their special, so they had been given free time or time to finish some work.

By the end of my first day, I was exhausted, scared, worried, and completely uninformed. I went home as close to tears as I could possibly be, without actually shedding any. I told my mom I had gotten in over my head, and I couldn't stay in this classroom. After the hitting, biting, scratching, throwing up and running out the door, I

truly did not know if I could last. I contemplated how to ask the principal to move classrooms, to tell him I was incapable of helping these students, to admit, that I was not suited for teaching special education, the field I had been so sure, for so long, that I wished to enter. After a long talk with my mom and dad, I decided I should give myself a week in this classroom. Maybe I could learn, maybe I would adapt, maybe, just maybe, there would be a glimmer of hope for me after all. By the end of the first week, I knew, this is where I should be. I want to be a teacher in a self-contained classroom. I want to make a difference, I want to help.

After being here for a while, I noticed that almost every child was having a problem with "transitioning" unexpectedly. I continued working in the school system for the following five years, and this problem seemed to continue. Fire drills, kicking, nurse, biting, specials, running... for most students, it seemed that no matter what the interruption, the students were not having an easy time transitioning unexpectedly. The children could often not "cope," or deal with their emotions positively. Rather, the reaction was often violent, aggressive, or anxious. Was there nothing that could be done? Why was it happening? What was the reason behind the meltdowns, break downs, and lack of organization? I entered this with the idea that I was going to find the answer. What can be done and how can I do it? But after thinking, talking, asking and discussing, I realized that I first had to discover why these interruptions were a occurring in the first place. As a perspective teacher, I want to discover; how can a classroom environment foster positive coping skills for students with special needs as they navigate diverse school settings?

Organization of the Thesis:

The purpose of this thesis is to provide qualitative data as to how young students and students with special needs transition throughout the seemingly endless environments they are faced with every day during school hours. Also, it will delve into how environmental factors contribute to the success or failure of these diverse school settings.

Chapter two is a focus of how literature describes what a school transition is, why they are detrimental to the way a student will manage a school day, how these times are vital for students with disabilities, and the suggestions for managing these times successfully. Chapter two will be based on and derived from scholarly articles, journals, and educational documents. It will be the basis for why and how the study is carried out in the research phases.

Chapter three will contain an explanation of qualitative teacher research conducted in the field; including how it will be formatted, progress, and unfold. Methodology and teacher research concepts will be explained and formatted for the reader to best understand the importance of the study.

Chapter four and five are a culmination of research and findings. They will analyze the data collected and provided suggestions as to what the results prove or suggest. The results of chapter four and five will also provide the reader with suggestions as to how to implement the findings and continue to delve into the subject of the importance of transition times and environmental influences for students with special needs.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Students with Special Needs and the Self-Contained Classroom

In works by Dube, MacIlvane, Mazzitelli, & McNamara, 2003; Grace, McLean, & Nevin, 2003, behavioral issues that arise in a self-contained classroom can be compared to the velocity and force of a train. The faster the train, and the larger the train, the harder it is to get it under control, or stop altogether. Similarly, behavioral momentum become harder to control the more intense the problem is. Behavioral momentum is often controlled by the way in which the situation is interpreted. "These researchers suggest that responding to stimulus conditions associated with high levels of reinforcement ("mass") is more resistant to interruption than responding to stimulus conditions associated with lower levels of reinforcement" (as cited in Lee, 2006, p.2).

The above section of Lee's article, as well as the others cited in this research, describe the importance of teacher intervention to help students make these time periods more fluid. Similarly, other researchers suggest that school environment, personnel, students, and families need to be consistently aware of the expectations in order to create an easy transitional environment for students with special needs. Positive support systems, pertaining to management, behavior, and organization can help ease students, especially those with special needs, through the day with minimal interruptions, (Morrissey 2010). Many problems during these times stem from outside sources, therefore, with proper intervention and planning, school professionals can help limit the issues, and provide an environment for more on-task behavior.

There are a number of students who have an infinite amount of needs within the

school setting, but for students with particular special needs, the intensity of intervention, support, planning and strategy often need to be more intense. For children with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) the need for proper coping strategies is necessary. Transition periods, periods of change and uncertainty often call for intervention. "Students with emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD) exhibit learning problems and behavioral deficits (Kauffman, 2005)... Findings from at least three recent studies support the hypothesis that the relationship between learning and behavior problems is developmental in nature," (Sutherland 2010, p.2-3). Similarly, Baker 2010 states, students with Autism Spectrum Disorder display an exceptional rage of unusual behaviors in classroom and school settings; "the characteristics of autism range along a continuum in five dominant areas social skills, communication skills, restrictive/repetitive behaviors and interests, sensory responses, and cognitive abilities," (p.2). It is apparent that when dealing with students with special needs, the specificity of the needs is critical, and understanding the difference of each and every learner is crucial.

Upon entering school, whether as a new student or a student with special needs, change is undeniable. Every class and circumstance allows time for uncertainty and interpretation. Although professionals involved know that change is happening constantly, there is nothing that can be done to keep it from happening.

Change is an inevitable part of life. In fact, there is very little about our world that does not change: seasons change, people mature from infants to elders, history evolves, technology advances. In most cases, changes in an individual's life are considered natural and good. But they can be difficult

as well, upsetting that which we know and have become accustomed to,

(Beliner 1993, p.2).

Change allows ample time for uncertainty, therefore upsetting that which is typical and expected. Multiple sources contribute to the idea that, "...a disability cannot be fully understood without considering the environmental context," (Verdonschot 2009, p.2).

According to the California University, students are easily influenced by what is happening around them, the structure [or lack thereof], of their environment, what is expected and how it is expressed. When an environment is not consistent, when there is not a clear behavior support system, when rules and expectations are not clear, inexperienced students or students with special needs can often become confused or lost within the task. When they have been broken by the lack of structure, students with special needs often suffer internally, externally or both. Baker 2010, suggests it is not uncommon of students who are diagnosed with specific special needs, to struggle with the ability to handle change. Therefore, in a school environment, a place that is ever changing, how does a student with special needs navigate the day? How will the environment impact a student's behavior, on-task behaviors, or positive learning experiences? "Often teachers without special education training are now responsible for students with these increased academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs, and many of them feel anxious about this prospect. Staff members in inclusive general educational environments need more comprehensive techniques for behavior management as their school populations change," (Morrissey 2010, p.2).

For many special needs students, change in environment, rules, expectations, teachers, and general surroundings may cause anxiety, frustration, and the inability to

reach their full potential. In essence, creating an environment with positive behavior supports creates an environment that is least restrictive for special needs students. "Unpredictability (Doyle, 1977, 1986) is a trait of classroom complexity... A classroom is a public place (Doyle, 1977, 1986), and all the classroom activities accumulate a common set of experiences that becomes part of the children's history," (Moen 2007, p.12). When a student has difficulty transitioning or settling in to different atmospheres around the school, he or she may become easily frustrated with that place, in turn, associating a bad relationship to that particular part of the school day. The child's association to this place, and this aspect of the child's "schooling history," may easily become colored and therefore, make transitions even more difficult than simply an ordinary transition for a special needs student.

As much as there is an emphasis on positive behavior supports, a lack of support and structure is detrimental to most students, but especially those with special needs. With lack of support and structure, students can often be lost in the ever changing environment of a daily school schedule. According to Sutherland 2008, students with special needs often need to be reminded what is expected of them, what the rules are, expectations and consequences. When navigating through a diverse school environment, many teachers [especially those who do not specialize in special education] often forget that behavioral support needs to be tiered or differentiated for the vast abilities of their many students. For instance, leaving a special education classroom to enter a special area class may leave room for interpretation and miscommunication. Just as all of our students are different and unique, we cannot be led to believe that students will be able to rely on the same amount of support. Some learn expectations through limited

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reassurance, yet some need to be coached. Research in Morrissey's 2010 article suggests that the levels of behavior support need to be differentiated in order to meet the needs of all students. When there is not a positive behavior system, students are likely to stifled in their ability to remain on-task.

Young Students and Inexperience with School and Classroom Expectations

When students are entering school for the first time, at a young age, the expectations, rules and demands are often very confusing for them. More specifically, when young students enter a classroom setting, questions of readiness and maturity are prevalent in the minds of parents and school personnel. Walker 1995 states, "Upon school entry, children take on the formal role of student (Eckert et al. 2008) and must successfully negotiate a range of heightened expectations from teachers and peers," (as cited in McIntyre, 2010, p.259). At a young and impressionable age, expectations for students need to be made and kept clear. A young student needs to be able to visualize and conceptualize what is expected of them and how to meet demands. As suggested by McIntyre 2010, young students moving from early childhood education to primary level education are moving from "family friendly" life skills to academic and behavioral expectations that are foreign concepts for many. Continuing throughout this article, McIntyre makes connections between special needs students and regularly educable kindergarten students and the difficulties that both groups have making transitions during and throughout school days. In terms of discussing how transitional times are similarly difficult for students with special needs, as well as young students, there are multiple aspects of predicted difficulty for both dynamics of students. These aspects include, "following directions, behavioral problems, academics, making needs known,

kindergarten readiness, getting along with others, separation from family, getting along with peers, and others," (McIntyre 2010, p. 261). The research proposed by McIntyre suggests that these are potential problems for transitions for either type of student, young and inexperienced, or a student with special needs. "Adequate planning and preparation, both before and after the student transitions, may help support students as they negotiate the heightened school demands," (McIntyre 2010, p.263). While the general idea of transitioning may seem hard for young students and students with special needs, the newness and expectations are often unclear, students become fearful of the unknown and strive to meet expectations of those in charge. "Admission to formal schooling marks a time of increased expectations for both social and academic skills, (Perry & Weinstein 1998, p.1)." The formality of school for first year students is similar to the feelings of newness for students with special needs. In this circumstance, the difficulties are interrelated with unfamiliarity. Perry 1998 states, "...similarities for young/new students and students with special needs, lies in their emotional, social and behavioral readiness for transitions, changes and school expectations, (p.1). Even regularly educable students become lost in the unknown if they cannot decipher what is expected of them by means of teacher example. Moss 1992 states that poorly orchestrated transitions can result in behavioral problems which can turn into a cycle of chaos and confusion. Students at this time can become so lost in the lack of clarity, that a behavioral nightmare is likely, which will feed into the cycle, poor transitions causing behavioral problems, and behavioral issues triggering poor transitional periods.

Current Transitional Theories and Practices

"Educational research identifies transitions as essential components of classroom management and describes them as the non-instructional time between classroom events," (Moss 1992, p.xi). Transitions are an essential part of everyday school life, and an event that cannot be avoided. Transitions occur throughout our school days more often than most realize. Whether transitioning from one activity to another, one class to another, one subject to another or from location to location, students are constantly being faced with having to deal with the non-instructional time between activities. If that is the case, the question that is raised is, how important is it to create structured time during the periods of non-instruction? Moss 1992 states, that teachers play the role of "orchestrators" during times of transitions, and during these times the teacher needs to be fully aware and prepared for what is ahead. She continues stating that, rules during these times must be clear, and what is expected should be modeled and talked about. Leading up to and immediately following, expectations, rules and follow through must be consistent, and all involved should "adhere to those rules," (Moss 1992, p.17-18).

Classroom Community and Environment

Daily transitions through diverse school settings make it difficult for many students to easily navigate a school day. "Daily transition times and places go relatively unattended to despite the need and opportunity they provide for promoting healthy development and addressing barriers to development and learning," (California University 2003, p. 30). The constant movement from one area to another, one activity to another, and one teacher for another takes a lot of practice, but even still, these times of transition are defined by the Center for Mental Health as "times of uncertainty." During

these times, it is important for professionals to remember that they can help create

positive periods of transition. "To meet the goals of No Child Left Behind and the

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, schools must understand the impact of

transitions and establish a range of transition supports," (California University 2003, p.9).

For all students, periods of transition prove to be a crucial part in the way in

which they handle navigating a school day. Transitions are critical times for both teachers

and students. "Efficient between-task and within-task transitions can greatly improve

academic learning time," (Lee 2006, p.1). As educators, it is important to be aware that

the way in which students handle themselves during these times, extends beyond internal

motivation. "Successful collaboration among all people involved is a crucial detail that

needs to be addressed before transition periods will be successful and effective," (Perry,

1998). Transitions are also largely influenced by the school environment, teachers, and

support strategies. Positive and productive transitions are dependent on all people and

surroundings involved. "Interventions to enable successful transitions make a significant

difference in how motivationally ready and able youngsters are to benefit from

schooling," (California University 2003, p.9). When dealing with students with special

needs, the need for positive behavior support strategies becomes even more necessary;

otherwise, productive time and on-task behaviors will often be lost in the shuffle of

changing environments, then the routine and target behaviors will have to be rebuilt from

the beginning.

> Maag (2001) states the following: ...ineffective or insufficient classroom
>
> management jeopardizes the smooth transition of all children and critically
>
> compromises the needs of children with problem behaviors (Stormont,

2002; Walker et al., 2004; Webster-Stratton, 1997). Many teachers fall short in establishing, communicating, and providing instruction for classroom routines and behavior expectations. Additionally, regarding social skills, teachers often focus on and redirect children's inappropriate behaviors while failing to recognize and pay similar levels of attention to desired behaviors, (as cited in Stormont, 2005, p.4).

Research conducted at California University 2003, suggests that if adults and school personnel become actively involved, and positively active, managing school environment becomes easier, thus, providing an easier time for students with special needs to transition through everyday activities. "Planning and implementing programs that support transitions for students, family, and staff provide an opportunity for school support staff to take a leadership role," (California University 2003, p 9). Ideally, there would be a way to inform a child of every twist and turn of a school day, yet the reality is that a school routine is consistently changing, often chaotic, and needs room for change and allowance for interruptions. How then, can a school step in to make the day as fluid as possible for a student who struggles with change? Offering positive behavior supports, creating a welcoming environment, discussing the day, talking about rules, and allowing time for asking questions provides a student with a deeper meaning of what will be happening in their surrounding environment. The most important issue, however; is keeping this consistent. A student navigating his or her day will often be influenced by his or her environment and while ideally, keeping it consistent would allow for ease within transitions, realistically, this may not always be possible.

"In some instances, it is what happens during the task-after a between-task

transition has occurred-that is of concern... Discrete tasks are composed of cycles of transition and task completion," (Lee 2006, p.3). There is an importance of recognizing each and every transition that occurs throughout the school day and providing students with the ability to manage that time period with the most ease and least restrictive environment.

Coping Strategies

How does someone find a word to encompass how to give students the ability to feel safe, successful and empowered throughout a school day as they are navigating the complexity of a special need? Baker 2010, suggests that when working with students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, that being in constant communication with all people who interact with the student to provide consistency and stability is a good method of meeting the needs of students with this particular disability. It is also clearly stated in this article that every person with Autism is unique and different so one must not assume that what works for one student will work for another. Stephen Shore, a Professor at Adelphi University, who has been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, explains, "When you have met one person with Autism, you have met one person with Autism," (Baker 2010, p.2). Similarly, students with emotional and behavioral disorders need special care when coping with diverse school settings, while congruently navigating their disabilities. For these students, a study conducted by Arizona State University proves that "classroom interventions substantially improved the on task behavior of each student," (Nahgahgwon 2010, p.1).

Although transitions are often a time of uncertainty, there are some instances wherein the way transitions occur and are managed can be predetermined. "While the

nature and scope of transitions vary, there are common features in planning and implementing interventions to support transitions... considerations about time, space, materials and competence arise at every step of the way," (California University 2003, p.17). There is something to be said for the relationship between atypical behaviors and undesirable behaviors in the classroom setting. For many children with disabilities, there is a correlation between the way in which they succeed or do not succeed that is a determinant of behaviors. Research conducted by Hinshaw 1992, suggests "The research literature consistently supports a co-occurrence between academic failure and problem behavior," (as cited in Sutherland, 2010, p.2). By providing students with adequate coping strategies, teachers can limit the occurrence of undesirable behaviors, control outbursts, and provide outlets for students to cope with periods of uncertainty.

The most common thread among research, to help students with special needs navigate diverse school settings, is providing them with positive behavior support systems throughout the entirety of the school. The trouble is, that in special needs classrooms, positive behavior support is secondary nature, yet without proper knowledge or understanding, implementing these plans is often more difficult than one would imagine. Schools need to work together to first get all personnel on the same page to determine what atmosphere will provide the most structure, easiest transition, and least restrictive environment for these students. Lewis 2005, cites numerous researchers coming up with the conclusion that when schools use school wide behavior support systems, office referrals and problematic behaviors decrease substantially.

Ideally, positive behavior systems would be setup so that all teachers would remain consistent in implementation and follow through. Schools would take time to

have professionals meet and decipher what is important to convey to the students, expectations, and rules. At this time, the school would also be responsible for making teachers aware of how to follow and implement these rules. Following, these rules and expectations would need to be conveyed to the student body. All students would need to be made aware of what is expected, and how the rules will be enforced. The goal then, would be to have the whole school community on the same page; allowing all people to navigate the day guided by a singular set of rules. The reality, however, is such that it extraordinarily difficult to have all teachers and students implement these rules in the same manner. Although this is ideal, what research shows is that the importance for positive behavior supports can differ slightly, but structure is necessary. When students make transitions outside of the classroom, they are often thrown into an environment with little structure, especially for students with special needs, this can serve as a detrimental problem.

When a student with special needs begins to navigate his or her school schedule, leaving his or her predominate classroom setting leaves a wide open chance for outside influences to affect the way in which the day is managed. If there is a behavior support system, even one that differs from the norm, one that is different from their home classroom setting, it is still beneficial. For instance, even if a classroom has a new PBS, the student will still be provided with a set of rules, guidelines, and expectations. A good behavior support system stresses the importance of student responsibility, teacher expectations, classroom rules, and a schedule in which the way the teacher will address the day. A teacher who implements a good behavior support system will also be able to differentiate for the different students and their differing needs, thus including children

with special needs. "Students with learning disabilities need assistance in learning that there are more productive strategies than trying to ignore academic problems." (Geisthardt 1996, p.5).

Conclusion

Any youngster may experience academic, emotional, and social challenges in negotiating transitions. And, failure to cope effectively with such challenges can have life-altering consequences," (California University 2003, p.22). It is up to teachers and the totality of school personnel, to design and implement positive community environments that foster and empower students with special needs, providing positive coping strategies throughout the diverse school settings.

Intervention strategies allow students to better meet the expectations and goals set forth for them throughout the many different school settings. "Understanding the theories and best practices related to early adolescence and school change are key to developing effective prevention programming. Given that multiple life events occur simultaneously during early adolescence, linking the stressor of school change to the environment to the development of problem behaviors has proven difficult. But the literature, while still seeking answers, can help teachers and preventionists to design and implement effective prevention efforts," (Berliner 1993, p.2). By intervening in a student's daily routine, they are prompted and supported through the ever changing school environment. "Effective coping is a resilient response to stress, functioning both to solve problems and manage emotional trauma. A goal of prevention is to overcome stressful life events and turn them into learning experiences, rather than having them trigger a crisis," (Berliner 1993, p.3).

Chapter Three

Research

Introduction to Setting

Charles F. Seabrook Elementary school is one of two elementary schools in Upper Deerfield Township, it houses preschool, kindergarten, first, second and third grade. There are about four hundred and twenty-five students enrolled at Seabrook. According to "education.com," Upper Deerfield spends just over $16,000 per student, splitting the cost between instruction, support services and other secondary expenditures. Also stated, that the student: teacher ratio is 11:1 for full time staff.

18% of students enrolled in Upper Deerfield School District schools have an IEP, and serves 3% of students with ELL instruction. Eligibility for free and reduced lunch was at 44% in 2009, based on family income. The male and female ratio is 47% female, 45% male. In 2009, a survey provided by "education.com" shows that 50% of students enrolled are White, 20% Black, 20% Hispanic, 2% Pacific Islander and 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native. The surrounding community pulls from a diverse background of people. Some students live in areas that are somewhat suburban and development based, some students are from more rural farm homes, and there are some students from an urban living environment. Located directly behind the school grounds is low income housing that has been recently built.

This study took place over the course of two placements. The first placement setting was a regular education kindergarten classroom. The classroom consisted of seventeen students, eight girls and eleven boys. The students are in school for a full six hour day. They have a homeroom, go to specials, and have classroom time consisting of

independent, whole group and small group instruction. At eleven o'clock, the students go to lunch and return to the classroom for specials or directed play. The afternoon consists of the same type of instruction as the morning session with snack included.

The seventeen students are on a very regimented routine wherein they know the rules and expectations of the classroom and what is expected of them individually. For the most part, the students are very well behaved, but because they are so young, a lot of small behavior problems arise that interrupt instructional time. Some of these things include being able to line up quickly and quietly, clean up independent centers, and transition from one type of activity to another. Unlike the major focus of the group I am really intending to study, the problems that arise among these students are due to young age and inexperience, rather than disabilities.

The setting served useful in discovering how to implement positive behavior supports in implementing fluidity during transitional periods. The students and the teacher were very welcoming and accepting of having me in their class, which made it easy to implement techniques and strategies to foster more productive transition periods.

In my second placement, I was in a resource room containing second and third grade students who struggled in reading, writing and math. The class serves more as a self-contained room, rather than a typical resource room setting. Instead of students being pulled out for a small segment of time, they spend almost the full day in resource room, being integrated to regular education settings for homeroom, lunch, recess and science/social studies. The classroom consists of seven second graders and three third graders. There are four girls and six boys who have all been classified with disabilities ranging from Autism Spectrum Disorder, specific learning disability and communication

impairment. The majority of the time the students are in the resource room, the students receive direct instruction in small group settings based on academic abilities. Behaviorally, the students are very well behaved and do not need any specific behavior interventions. The classroom routine is very structured and the rules and expectations are clear. The students know what is expected of them and how they are to navigate the many different school settings. They know when they are expected to be in the resource room, the regular education classroom, specials and so on. They also are very good about knowing that the rules of their regular classroom teacher may be different than that of their resource room teacher and are very good about making adjustments.

Research Design and Methodology

The data in this research will be qualitative because it is appropriate for my study, which is trying to determine how to set up a classroom community feeling to foster positive behavior supports and coping skills for young students and children with special needs, this information will be vast and differentiated based on the range of students present, rather than quantitative data which aims to use mathematical and scientific computations to solve a specific problem. I'm interested in collecting data based on observations and happenings as the data is implemented, subjectively distinguishing the positive and negative affects that specific support strategies and coping skills have on individual students. Also, how implementing methods and classroom supports based on character education will support and reinforce positive behavior among all students. This study uses a numerous amount of data sources, including a teacher journal, observations and pictures of self-monitoring techniques, student journals, team building activities based on an interpretation of token economy, and student questionnaires; all of which will

be analyzed and interpreted.

"Inquiry stance is perspectival and conceptual a worldview, habit of mind, a dynamic and fluid way of knowing and being in the world of educational practice that carries across the course of the professional career not a teacher training strategy, a sequence of steps for solving classroom or school problems, or a skill to be demonstrated by beginners to show competence," (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009, p.113). According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009, inquiry as a teacher practitioner within the research paradigm is a large responsibility. Accountability is relative to the nature of the study because the context and results and relevant to the nature of the classroom; accountability is witnessed in "the language of outcomes, results, effectiveness, evidence, monitoring systems, test scores, adequate yearly progress and bottom lines," (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009, p.9), continuing, they state that the researcher will become particularly invested in research and well-being because they are a piece of the totality of the classroom setting.

Context of Study

The study based on, how a positive classroom environment can foster better coping skills for inexperienced students and students with special needs, as they navigate diverse school settings, will be qualitative as opposed to quantitative. Quantitative data is based more on mathematical computations and scientific analyses and comparisons; contrary wise, qualitative data collection allows more room for interpretation, and is more subjective based on interpretations of the researcher. Qualitative data is also "introspective" in that the methods of collection are dependent on the ability of the subject to assess oneself, as well as the ability of the researcher to interpret data (Hubbard

and Power, 1999).

For this study numerous data sources will be used, including but not limited to, student based questionnaires, and teacher journals for recording and analyzing data based on patterns and trends found during observations. To assess and discover which attitudes, feelings and coping strategies work best for each individual student, the following instruments for data collection will include the following behavior support systems; teacher led student journals, token economy reward based systems, paired conversations, group reflection and picture charts; audio, visual, student and teacher artifacts will document and provide evidence for all of these strategies.

The first source used was student self-evaluations and questionnaires. The questions will provide insight to student feelings about, learning styles, habits, abilities and daily routines. This questionnaire will be used during paired conversations, and group reflections. The questionnaire would help determine students' interpretations of their abilities, habits, and ways of dealing with different situations throughout the day. The results will be used to better understand each student and suggest particular methods that may be best suited for dealing with the ever changing school setting and how to provide the most beneficial coping skills.

Teacher journals and data records will be kept in order to keep a running record of daily behaviors, patterns, actions, reactions and other apparent data to be sure that all data collection is congruent. Teacher journals serve as a primary source of qualitative data collection, yet often provides information and detailed descriptors about classroom scenarios. The teacher journal will record daily events, as well as personal reflections on specific situations and daily occurrences. I will use the journal to observe the many

different settings a student is faced with throughout the school day, congruently, the atmosphere, environment, expectations, support systems, and reactions. This will provide insight to the situations a specific student struggles most with and provide possibility between discovering triggers and the need for coping skills. The data will allow me to make connections between students, atmospheres, actions and reactions, this data will allow me to implement positive behavior supports and calculated implementations of coping skills during specific events, to be discussed in chapters four and five.

Student artifacts, such as journals, charts, and records will be collected to analyze and assess the success of particular coping strategies and behavior support plans. This will also provide further insight into student feelings about daily occurrences, specific situations, and classroom community.

Study and Implementation

This study is designed to examine how teachers can aid students throughout diverse school settings by providing positive behavior supports along with a supportive classroom environment. The study took place over a sixteen week period in a low income, Title I school district. The time was split for ten weeks in a regular education full day kindergarten setting, and a second and third grade resource room setting.

The study consisted of implementing new and old concepts in a way to provide easier, more successful transitions for inexperienced students and students with special needs. Implementation was completed in multiple steps. First, teacher led discussions provided means of addressing current problem behaviors, and introducing new concepts to help students cope. The teacher provided examples, and allowed for students to ask questions regarding the discussion. The teacher modeled current behaviors followed by

ideal and desirable behaviors. In order to provide visual stimuli, each new concept was introduced along with a hands on counterpart. The concept of color coding and self-monitoring was also introduced so that students would gain a deeper understanding of responsibility and self-awareness.

Throughout the implementation of this study, the researcher kept a teacher journal. The journal kept records of current student behavior, current intervention methods, teacher indicated classroom issues, and times of transition. After new techniques and ideas were introduced, the teacher journal served to keep track of the way in which the students adapted to the new behavior support strategies. Because classroom community is an underlying means of how to create positive experiences during transition times, practices of character education were used within lessons, methods and everyday tasks.

Student practice consisted of multiple media sources. Most strategies were implemented with a multi-sensory approach to fully engage young students and students with special needs. Practices consisted of student questionnaires, "Bucket Fillers," tattling vs. telling, self-monitoring gauges, student journals and color coded materials. The students incorporated self-monitoring, collaboration, teamwork and striving to meet individual and team goals in order to adapt to the new practices that were introduced.

For the time spent working with these two classrooms, the objective is to collect qualitative data to give insight to the world of student transitions. While looking into the multiple transitional periods, the objective was to find ways to support positive behavior and classroom community in the ever changing environment. Teacher research allowed for a more personal evaluation of each class, and methods were implemented based on

classroom needs, student age and ability, maturity level and desired outcomes.

In chapter four, individual methods, samples and pictures will be used to display all methods implemented, and fully discuss the premise and outcome for each.

Study Limitations

During the research implementation portion of this research study, a major limitation was time restriction. By the time my topic and research methods were approved, the time for implementation in my first placement was limited to about a week and a half. I chose to implement methods I thought the students would grasp most easily, but was not in the classroom long enough afterward to witness long term effects. By the time I had moved to my second placement, in the special needs classroom, time was a major factor as well. Due to the timing of the placement change, I entered the class in the midst of test preparation and actual testing dates. The lack of time for implementation and assessment of methods proved as a substantial difficulty in collecting consistent data. Time restrictions were the most troublesome part in the data collection process.

Another limitation was the placement I was given for the special education portion of my student teaching experience. Much of my experience and interest in this topic was based on previous experiences and placements. I had acquired interest in the issue of behavior supports and transition periods in working with students who truly struggled to grasp the concept, those being students with disabilities like Autism and Behavioral Disorders. The class I was placed in, was a classroom of students with learning disabilities and academic delays. The resource room served as a classroom of specific and direct academic instruction, and not as a place of need for behavioral modifications. The students were well behaved and did not have a pressing need for

transitional support strategies. Because of this, I spent a lot of my time implementing self-monitoring techniques so that students could identify and help prevent such occurrences from happening.

Lastly, limitations were in regards to the current management techniques and strategies being used. Walking into an already well-established classroom leaves little need for adjustment or change. Also, being that I am a guest in the classrooms I work in, I believe if strategies are working, it is something that should remain the same. Because the class was not my own, I did not feel comfortable fully implementing all of my strategies and ideas. For instance, if the students had been allowed, until this point, to walk through the hallways talking, it is not my place in the brief time I am working there to change protocol. The difference also is that from the resource room, students are often coming to and from, from one activity to another with a different adult. The expectations and rules of each, being different. I found that being a guest in a classroom, altering your own personal ideas, behaviors and strategies to remain consistent with your supervising teacher is a limitation. I find that although there was time to implement my own new strategies, it was inconsistent; the majority of the time, I felt, was spent adapting and understanding the expectations of the mentor teacher and keeping things routine with how the year has gone for the last seven months.

What Lies Ahead

Chapter four will be an examination and explanation of collected data based on student self-evaluations, teacher journals, audio and video recordings, and student artifacts. Chapter five will discuss possible implications based on the study, ideas for continuing research, and further implementation to extend the study.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis

Introduction

Chapter four analyzes and discusses the data collected during the research process and how findings addresses the main question: How do environmental influences impact the way inexperienced and special needs students navigate diverse school settings? A teacher observation journal, outcomes of a token economy reward based system, student self-monitoring, reflective student journals, and student questionnaires will be assessed in order to gather conclusions in regards to the research topic and question. Each data source will be introduced and the purpose of each will be thoroughly explained, afterwards, the results and data relating to each source will be provided and analyzed. All names used to depict firsthand accounts are pseudo names, no real participant names are used in this study.

Revisiting the Study

In order to assess the classroom climate, first, it was important for teacher observations. I kept a teacher research journal of all of the current techniques that were being used during transition periods, and how the children acted, reacted and interacted during these times. Also, I kept note of current student behaviors that seemed troublesome or distracting during transition times. I kept track of all of these instances during transitions between activities, subjects, classrooms and activities. After watching the children throughout the school day, I tried to diagnose specific places and times the students had the most difficulty, also what the factors were during those times. During my observations, I was able to not only get to know the students, but what methods were

good to keep, which needed to be built upon and which should be changed completely. I wanted to provide the students with multiple methods to help them cope and display appropriate behaviors during the many transitions during a school day. Also, I wanted to give the students the ability to self-assess, monitor and redirect during times of uncertainty and frustration, especially so that they can be aware of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors between and among diverse school settings. An unexpected discovery during my observations was that with the classrooms I was working in, most of the students' undesired behavior was displayed in the way they interacted with each other. This led to the conclusion that some of the behavior supports and planning that would be implemented, needed to be based around the concepts of character education. This became the thread that tied all of my thesis strategy implementation pieces together.

Method One: Color Codes

Working with inexperienced students and students with special needs, I find the best ways to relay important messages is through making simple connections to students' prior knowledge. For instance, when trying to convey an important message to students a good method that is used often is color coding. For the purposes of this thesis research, I used the colors red and green so that students could associate whether or not they should go or stop. All of the new practices being implemented were color coded green and red. The desirable behavior and things they should keep doing were green, signifying that they are doing something that they should continue to do. Undesirable behaviors were placed on red paper to let the children know they should stop what they were doing and redirect their actions. These colors were used on the signs for tattling-versus-telling and "Bucket Fillers."

Method Two: Peace and Quiet

In many classrooms, transitional times are a time of some sort of organized chaos. The students are out of their seats, classroom objects are being moved, expectations are changing, tasks are altered, and most of all the volume level increases dramatically. During this time, teachers have many different methods of regaining the attention and focus of their children. Some of these methods include turning off the lights, clapping, or saying something out loud in anticipation of a student choral response. In all of my observations, I have noticed that many of these methods evoke the opposite response a teacher is hoping for. Often times the clapping or anticipated choral response elicits an even larger increase in volume; likewise, the lights off method often evokes children overreacting to the sudden darkness. Similarly, yelling is something that some teachers turn to when all else fails, this is another method that causes the volume and confusion in a classroom to increase, it often is lost in translation with young and special needs students, and is a method I feel should be reserved for only detrimental and exceptionally important times of behavior intervention and correction.

The method I decided to use is a method I refer to as peace and quiet. I hold one hand with two fingers [the peace sign] high in the air, while the other hand has one finger in front of my lips, signifying quiet. I stand in a central location, and wait for students to see me and mimic my actions. When I get the silent attention of the class, I redirect their focus and restate the rules and expectations. This method was introduced in order to keep the noise level low, and make sure all students were focused on the teacher and task.

Method Three: Tattling vs. Telling

In my first placement, I worked with kindergarten students in a full day setting.

Many of the students were immature in terms of schooling, and were not fully aware of school and classroom expectations. Often times, meltdowns and behavioral issues during times of transition reverted to immature behavioral outbursts. Two of the biggest problems were in relation to whining and tattling. The classroom teacher suggested that tattling interrupted a lot of class time and often was a big issue in transitional readiness. I had never seen any method of intervention for this problem, so I was unsure how to address it; however, if it was a serious classroom issue in terms of transitions, I needed to find something to limit the issue and help students self-assess.

During an in-service professional day, the guest speak, Alice Gibson referenced a method called tattling-versus-telling. I looked further into the terminology and for this issue, I cited an online magazine called *Metrokids* and the article "Tattling-Versus-Telling (2011)." The article focused on the difference between tattling on someone and telling on someone, the good and the bad, and how to assess which you are doing. The article states that many children do not know how to handle confrontation or uncomfortable moments on their own, so they look for authoritative figures to help them solve their problems. The article suggests methods for teaching children how to determine if what they are saying is a tattle or a tell. My own interpretation of this information allowed me to create an interactive chart and method for children to assess on their own whether what they are doing is tattling or telling, (see Appendix A). This was displayed on an interactive poster hung directly across from the teacher's desk. A very important message was communicated during whole group instruction. It was crucial for the students to know that if someone (including themselves) was in serious danger, was seriously hurt or sick, they should not stop and self-assess. The students were told that in the case of an

emergency they were to find the nearest adult.

Method Four: "Bucket Fillers"

Working in a full day kindergarten setting, I was introduced to a substantial amount of collaborative transitional periods. During many task or location changes, students were expected to take care of themselves and their belongings and then help their fellow classmates. During this time, I noticed the students were more interested in being the first to finish and move to the next location, activity or get in line, rather than helping their friend. This created a sort of ripple effect in that students then began to tattle on those who were not helping, arguing began and transitions were taking longer than need be. Because the teacher was such an advocate of collaborative transitions, it was clear there needed to be some sort of activity that would encourage team work, and create smoother and quicker transitions.

To address this issue, I referred the "Bucket Filler Program." "Bucket Fillers" is a program designed in order to promote good character in a classroom setting, which should carry over in all aspects of daily living. A book written by Carol McCloud, "Have You Filled Your Bucket Today: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids (2006)," is a great way to introduce the concept to students. In most programs, students work to fill their own personal bucket, while trying to refrain from dipping into someone else's. By dipping into someone's bucket, they in turn are dipping into their own. Because this was implemented in a short amount of time, and collaboration was a huge priority for the teacher I was working with, I thought it would be a good idea to have one class bucket, rather than an individual one for every student. Having one large bucket, rather than individual ones allowed the students to take responsibility for their own actions, while

working together cooperatively for a team goal. The class bucket was decorated and displayed in a central location so that the students would have a constant reminder that they are working as a team to fill the bucket. I used illustrations from McCloud's book in order to visually depict instances of bucket filling and bucket dipping, I also created a list of simple words and phrases to remind students what would help fill the bucket and what would constitute dipping in the bucket, (see Appendix B and Appendix C). When a student was caught doing something that would help fill the bucket, they were made an example of. I had them stand in front of the class and say what I just saw them doing, then I would say, "That means they are a bucket filler! Go ahead and put one in!" The student would then go pick a pom-pom to put in the bucket. When a student was displaying undesirable behavior, I would simply state, "Do you think you are being a bucket filler or a bucket dipper?" This would serve as a warning to remind the student that they are not following the rules and expectations of the classroom. After a second time, the student would quietly be told they needed to go dip in the bucket and take one out. This was used to foster collaboration during cooperative transition periods.

Method Five: Self-Monitoring Speedometer

In my special education setting, after observations and discussions with the cooperating teacher, I recognized that there were not any noticeable behavioral problems. Upon further observations, I found that although the students were often working collaboratively, during transitional periods, some small disagreements, unpreparedness and confusion led to arguments, incomplete work, and refusal to follow classroom rules. During these times of difficulty, students often had a hard time talking about why they were upset or what caused uneasiness during transitional periods. To work on this issue, I

wanted to give students the option of self-monitoring so that the problem could be addressed immediately prior to or following a transition, as well as other classroom times.

To help intervene in these troublesome transition times, I referenced *Stensaas, A., & Calder, T. (2009),* for a self-monitoring "behavioral speedometer." Each student got to cutout and color one speedometer, again following the theme of red and green, and this time adding yellow. The speedometers were placed on the top corner of each student's desk. The students were introduced to this concept in a small group setting, and were instructed to use the speedometer to indicate how they were feeling throughout the day. The arrow would be placed on green if they were feeling good and could carry on as normal, red was used to indicate that things were moving too quickly and the student was feeling overwhelmed or frustrated, and yellow was to show that they were feeling bored, off task or lackadaisical. The speedometers were to be personal, and only discussed between the full time classroom teacher, myself and the student. This method was introduced so that students would not internalize problems they were having during class times, so that they would interfere with transitional times. When the student moved the indicator arrow to a specific color, the student would be addressed quietly and asked how they would choose to help fix the problem.

Method Six: Student Response Journals

Students were given journals in which they were to use preprinted emoticon faces to help them describe how they were feeling during certain times throughout the day. The students stated what emotion they were feeling at that particular time, why, and other important things that happened during their day that they would like to share. Students

were told they could write in their journal and it would only be seen by the classroom teacher, the student and myself. The journals were used so that students could use animations, words and drawings to express their feelings.

Method Seven: Student Questionnaires

The students were introduced to a questionnaire based on their feelings about current class environment, atmosphere and their overall feelings of community with their teacher and classmates. The students would be asked particular questions before implementation of behavior supports and strategies, then again at the end of the study. The questions were based on students' sense of belonging, collaboration, dedication and teamwork in the everyday context of the school routine. The students were first asked the questions in regards to how they are feeling in regards to the classroom before any changes are made. After new techniques were implemented, they were asked if things felt better, worse or the same as they did before there were changes made. The first use of the questionnaire was used to help the teacher researcher determine what the students identified as issues in the class, and the second completion of the questionnaire helped see what techniques were beneficial in the eyes of the students.

Observations

Observations were conducted on two separate occasions. The first set of observations took place as the class was currently functioning, prior to the introduction of any new strategies. The second set of observations took place following the implementation of new strategies. The first set of observations were conducted in order to better understand the dynamic of the students and how they function individually and as a whole class throughout transitional periods and diverse school settings. The objective was

to understand what was currently successful in supporting positive behaviors during transitions. After making observations and analyzing the data, new techniques were implemented to intervene in what seemed like troublesome times of transition. The second set of observations were conducted in order to assess student response and whole class outcomes after implementation.

Placement One: Full Day Regular Education Kindergarten

Three types of behavioral support intervention were used during the first portion of the teacher research placement. These three methods included, color coding, tattling-versus-telling and "Bucket Filling." The strategies were introduced in this order, one at a time, to achieve students fully understanding without overwhelming. The methods were introduced in this particular order from the perspective of easiest concept to grasp, to the seemingly most difficult, wherein, by the end of the process, all methods of intervention would be used cohesively by the end of the research period.

Pre-intervention Observations

After spending time as an active observer in this classroom, I thought it was important to take a step back and thoroughly assess the classroom climate in its totality. I felt as though it was important to not only record times of transition, but the times immediately preceding and immediately following. It is important to understand the classroom dynamic, and how students interact. By better understanding actions and behaviors, it is easier to target correctional methods and intervention strategies.

During my observation period, which spanned over one week of time throughout all class and school activities, I was able to better understand the inner workings of the class. For kindergarten students, it was important to note that they are in a full day

setting. During the long day, the students move from place to place and activity to activity numerous amounts of times. During these times, the level of independence is extremely high, which forces the students to take accountability for themselves. The daily class schedule is as follows:

Table One: *Kindergarten Transitional Schedule*

Morning	Midday	Afternoon
Bus → breakfast/attendance/calendar	*Centers → lunchroom*	**Seat work → math whole group**
Classroom → special area class	*Lunchroom → recess*	**Whole group → centers**
Specials → seat worksheets	*Recess → circle*	Centers → social studies/science book/project
Seat → circle	Circle → seat work	**Project → snack**
Circle → seat		*Snack → dismissal*
Seat → centers		

In the above example, periods of transitions marked in bold faced letters denote times when teamwork and collaboration is used, and italicized letters show times of transition when students are outside of the classroom. Throughout the school day, the teacher stressed the importance of independence and responsibility. In the times marked in bold letters, are times when students are working cooperatively and using table box materials. Although for the most part the students worked well together, there was not a large emphasis on teamwork and collaboration. Students were expected to do so, with little explanation as to why. Because independence and responsibility were so important, students often seemed most worried about doing what they needed to do, and being blind to the needs of their classmates. Notes of this were kept in my teacher research journal. Some recorded instances were observed as students were cleaning their tables before transitioning to other activities. In one instance a student rushed to put his crayon bag in

the table box, in doing so, he knocked over another student's bag. He returned to pick up hi crayon bag, left his classmates on the table and did not return the table box to its proper location. Afterward, the full time classroom teacher asked who the last person was at the table, and why the table box was not put away. No student said they were the last student, the classroom helper came to put the table box away.

Some identifiable behavioral issues during transitional periods were excessive tattling, bossiness to classmates, not keeping hands and feet to themselves, worries about meeting time constraints and off task behaviors. Also, some current transitional behavior support strategies being used now are a large timer displayed on the SMARTboard, teacher stating, "1...2" student choral response, "eyes on you," and reciting a poem before entering the hallway to announce they are ready, prepared and well behaved.

After observations, it is clear that the students need to work better together to ease the feeling of hurriedness during transitional periods. It also appears that students respond well to positive feelings and feedback from their peers. While observing the classroom, when students received positive feedback from their peers, they often seemed more motivated to continue with the behavior. In one instance, a student who rode the bus needed help packing up at the end of the day. The bell had rung, so a student who walks began helping him clean up. When the student said thank you, the one helping decided to try to help everyone else in the class (even those who did not need it), before leaving. Considering these two observations, data suggests that enforcing collaboration and teamwork will make it easier for students to transition smoothly, and make it less likely for students to race, argue or tattle throughout.

Response Record: Color Coding

Using color coding to differentiate between desirable and undesirable behaviors was a way in which students could relate new information to prior knowledge. Behavioral expectations were placed on green paper, in green writing and displayed in a central location for all students to see. Small words, short phrases and clear directions were written in green ink on green paper, for the children to reference as positive behaviors. The same process was used with red paper and red ink, to convey to the students what behaviors were undesirable. The students were introduced to the concept by relying on prior knowledge that red means stop and green means go. Before any implementation, a group discussion was led to assure that the students could relate red and green, to stop and go. Also, they were asked to team talk to discuss places and times they had seen red and green as warning signs. After the introduction of the color coding, the students were told that they would be seeing the colors around the classroom, and that if they had questions relating to behaviors, they could first reference the colors and remember what they mean. Before teacher intervention was necessary, the students were asked to try to decide if they could assess their own behaviors. If the students were carrying on with behaviors on the green side of a chart, they knew they were doing the right thing, and should keep going. If they caught themselves acting out a behavior on the red side of the chart, they knew they should stop what they were doing.

After introducing the students to the concept of color coding, tattling-versus-telling telling was introduced. Because telling meant the students were doing the right

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thing, all telling behaviors were posted on green paper, all tattling behaviors were posted on red paper. With the introduction of green and red color coding, and tattling-versus-telling, the students were quick to respond to the concept of behavioral monitoring. Because students were self-assessing, data was limited to observations. When students decided they were about to tattle, rather than tell, they simply returned to their seats.

Response Records: Tattling-Versus-Telling

During the first week of implementation, the students walked over to the teacher's desk where they would begin to say, "He said..." We would direct the student to think, and asked them, "Are you tattling or telling?" We followed by walking the students to the large chart to help them decipher if it was a tattle or a tell. There we would go through the details with the student and help them decide together. The sign was placed directly across from the teacher's desk so that the students would be more likely to stop and self-assess before continuing on with a tattle. The first week was based on a large amount of teacher prompting and reminding, but data was already suggesting that students were able to decipher what was a tattle or tell.

During the second week, students were no longer walked over to the chart or prompted to read through with the teacher, instead they were told to "think." Think was a sort of code word for the students to refer to the chart. During the second week, every student was prompted to "think," and most students decided that what they had approached the teacher for was a tell and problem solved on their own. Through observations, problem solving on their own meant talking it out, asking a friend for help or ignoring the problem altogether. The students who decided it was a tell when it should have been a tattle were walked through the concept with teacher prompting again. One

student struggled for a while with this concept. This particular student often acts like the teacher, and is corrected on actions where she seems to be overstepping boundaries. This student has a hard time deciphering what is and is not an emergency, because she gets herself involved in situations that do not involve her. On the other hand, there was a particular student who reacted very strongly during many situations. This particular student responded very well the concept of tattling-versus-telling. A few times that this student approached the chart for help, he would turn around and say, "Never mind," and return to his seat.

By the third week and for the remainder of the time spent in this class, most students began using the chart completely on their own and problem solving without the need for teacher intervention. While some students still needed some prompting, most students could determine what constituted as an emergency, and for the situations that were not an emergency.

In a thirty minute time period during free play centers, four students independently referred to the chart and decided what they were thinking of reporting was a tattle, and returned to their center. Three of those four students immediately began playing again, and one said, "Could you please stop doing that?" Another student who approached the sign during this thirty minute period decided he needed to tell. The student reported that another was poking him. Putting your hands on another person is breaking a classroom rule, so the student was correct that it was a tell, and teacher mediation was provided to resolve the situation.

While this helped classroom function on the large scale, it showed positive results in terms of transitioning between activities and classroom locations. Previously, during

those periods there was an escalation of tattling, afterward the amount of tattling diminished remarkably. Students seemed less likely to worry about tattling while transitioning between and among activities, and more concerned with completing the task at hand. Students were more likely to discuss their problems together, and work out situations through conversational methods. Classroom community was therefore focused more on collaboration and transitional periods became times of teamwork. The data collected in the teacher research journal has suggested that transition periods benefited from the use of self-assessment in tattling-versus-telling. Students were solving their own problems, and the data suggests that there are less transitional interruptions for tattling. Also, less frequent teacher mediation allowed for teacher attention on bigger issues. Students were more likely to solve small problems on their own and work cooperatively to come to an agreement.

Response Records: "Bucket Fillers"

To introduce the concept of bucket filling, I performed a read aloud of McCloud's "Have you Filled your Bucket Today: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids," and asked the students to actively participate to the story. We covered what it meant to be a bucket filler and a bucket dipper and the whole class collaborated to make a list of behaviors that would be considered dipping or filling. After the whole class decided on a list, the method of color coding was used again. Behaviors the students deemed a filling behavior were placed on green paper, and dipping behaviors were written on red paper. A poster with the two behaviors and pictures from the book were displayed as a visual reminder and hung in the front of the classroom. The class bucket was placed above the poster, and was accessible for students to fill and dip into the bucket so when they were responsible

for the action accompanying their own behavior.

After implementation, students displaying ideal behaviors were often called to the front of the classroom and would then be instructed to go "fill the bucket." This was done in front of the class so that the students would not only see ideal behaviors, but noticed that they were being recognized. For example, on day one of implementation one student came to tell me that the boy at her table asked her if she needed help cleaning up. I asked the two students to come to the front of the classroom and asked for all attention up front. Dana announced to her classmates that Bob asked her if she needed help cleaning up. I then asked Bob why he asked, he responded by saying, "A bucket filler would help their friend." Dana and Bob were told they were being working cooperatively and that meant they were being bucket fillers, they were instructed to go place a pom-pom in the class bucket. Immediately after this occurrence, I was able to record in my teacher research journal four more instances of table members reporting cooperation while cleaning up between activities. Each time, the students were given permission to fill the bucket. At the end of the first week, we sat as a class and discussed bucket filling again. Until this point, the students were only warned about bucket dipping, so no one had to dip into the bucket, instead they were told they were not displaying good behaviors and asked if they thought they were being a filler or dipper. During our conversation, we talked about starting to have to dip in the bucket for undesirable behaviors. The students were told that they would be given one warning about undesirable behaviors, and the second time would require them to dip into the bucket. There was also discussion about doing what you know is right, and going beyond expectations. I informed the students that every time you do something nice or kind, you are filling a bucket, but I would be looking for more

than that. I explained to the students that I would be looking for not just what was expected, but what surpassed expectations.

After the group conversation, during the second week of implementation, we had our first bucket dipper. David was talking and taking playing with things on his desk, while a friend was presenting their work to the class. Upon closer look, I realized he was taking things that belonged to a classmate. I asked him quietly, "Do you think you are being a bucket filler or a bucket dipper right now? Please decide what the right thing to do is, or you will be asked to go dip in the class bucket." After a few moments of sitting quietly, David began talking over his classmate again, and trying took out things from his crayon box and was playing. He was quietly instructed to take a pom-pom from the bucket. Although this was done privately, some of his classmates saw what had happened. When the student was done presenting her work, we transitioned to reading circle. At the carpet, we readdressed what it meant to be a bucket dipper. The sign was displayed on the board to be talked about again. At this point, I felt it was important to remind students that even though there may be a time when they were bucket dipping, it did not mean they could not become a bucket dipper. They were told that by exceeding expectations and being an exceptional classmate, they could always be a bucket filler. Later that afternoon, the class was having snack time. Students were in line to choose their drinks. There were two students left and only one chocolate milk. David had the last chocolate milk and the student behind him stated, "Oh man, I really wanted chocolate milk today." David turned around and said, "You can have this chocolate milk, because I like regular milk too." He walked over placed the chocolate milk on the table, and went to get a regular milk. On his way back, I told him I was very proud of him for being kind and

sharing with a friend. I asked him to go fill the bucket.

For the remainder of the time spent in this placement, bucket dipping was a seldom occurrence. During this time, only six instances of bucket dipping were recorded. The reasons ranged from putting hands on another student, not following classroom rules and taking things that were not theirs. On the contrary, records were kept of bucket filling, which happened multiple times on a daily basis. Students were asked to fill the bucket for recorded behaviors such as, helping friends clean up centers, holding doors, picking up things around the classroom and getting exceptional reports from special area classroom and the lunch room.

Notes kept on student response to the concept of the "Bucket Fillers," suggests that students responded positively to the concept, and it aided in the development of more successful transition periods. This was apparent during transitional times when students were leaving from seat work to leave the classroom. Students were likely to help each other pick up their table boxes, rather than run to get in line. By doing so, the children could earn pom-poms. The result was positive for the class in that they were working to fill the bucket, helping each other, not rushing to get in line and starting the next activity on a positive note. In another instance, student behavior changed whilst at activities. By displaying extraordinary behaviors, they not only are earning pom-poms, but they are beginning transitional periods with a positive attitude. By setting up a behavioral support system, students were able to begin, go through and end transitional periods in a positive light. The use of the bucket fillers method provided an easier and more rewarding concept of teamwork and collaboration. It seems that students were so determined to be a bucket filler, that they were likely to help friends clean up their tables, centers and get prepared

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for upcoming activities. On these occasions, good character was being promoted and rewarded, as well as making transitions happen quicker and smoother. Students seemed less likely after implementation to argue, and more likely to work cooperatively to complete tasks quicker as well as fill the bucket. The implementation of bucket filling in collaboration with tattling-versus-telling led to a significant decrease in tattling and confrontation, and an increase in cooperation, teamwork and appreciation. The data suggests that students responded positively to this method, and in return, there was a positive effect on transitional periods. Because students are aware that by displaying exceptional behaviors, there were numerous recorded occurrences of the whole class transitioning from seat work to circle, centers to being in line and from outside of the class to coming in quickly, quietly and efficiently.

Response Records: Student Questionnaires

Before the implementation of any new strategies, students were asked to respond to questions pertaining to the classroom environment and personal behaviors, after the implementation of transitional intervention strategies, students who responded with concerns previously were asked the same questions again.

The first time the questions were asked, most of the students responded positively; however, there were a few students who were not in agreement with some of the ideal scenarios for an everyday classroom environment. The students with bad feelings in regards to some of the questions were in response to good work being recognized by their peers or being treated fairly, lack of a fair environment, following rules and not always treating their friends the way they should be.

The questionnaire was asked again to the students who responded with negative

feedback to the ideal classroom environment and asked them to answer the questions since the implementation of the new techniques. These students were asked if tattling-versus-telling and Bucket Fillers made these instances better, worse or if they remained the same.

The conclusion of the questionnaire suggests that with the positive reaction to the individual methods and student behaviors throughout the day, and especially during transitional periods, that students felt the implementation positively affected the classroom environment. Students responded to the questionnaire stating that they felt that after implementation they felt like their good behaviors were being acknowledged by their peers. Also, they said they were more likely to treat their friends the way they knew they should. After one student said he was more likely to treat his friends the way they should be, I asked, "Why?" He responded saying, "Because if I don't, I'll be a bucket dipper."

Placement Two: Second and Third Grade Resource Room

In the second placement, more age appropriate and higher order thinking methods were introduced to help students manage their behaviors throughout diverse school settings and throughout transitional periods.. Students in this age range were introduced to the concept of self-monitoring and regulating. Two methods of behavioral support strategies were used in this setting, including a "behavioral speedometer," (Stensaas, 2009), and student response and self-evaluation journals. In this particular grade level, students spoke more freely about their feelings, concerns and reactions in response to the multiple transitional periods they were faced with throughout their school day. Methods of behavioral support were introduced one at a time, while given adequate amount

guidance for students to thoroughly grasp the concept of how to use the new tools.

Pre-intervention Observations

Upon entering this classroom, I was surprised that this resource room class seemed to function more like a self-contained classroom and less like a resource room. The students remained in the resource room for the majority of the day, and only went out for science/social studies and lunch. The second grade students started the day in their regular education grade level homeroom, and entered the resource room right after. The third grade students remained in their homeroom for writer's workshop, and then entered the resource room. The two grades remained together until a mixed group was called out for physical therapy, occupational therapy or speech. When those children returned, there was time for leveled reading groups [based on ability, not grade]. Afterward, the children went to their special area class and came back for a snack and read aloud. Next, the second graders left for lunch. The third graders stayed in the class for math, then proceeded to lunch. The second graders returned to the resource room for math, and the third graders went to science/social studies in their homeroom class, and the second graders did the same in theirs.

The most surprising aspect was how much of the day was spent in the resource room. Unlike any other resource room I had seen before, these student received the majority of their schooling in the resource room, small group setting. The second most surprising thing was that there was still a level of continuity and progress for each student with the excessive number of transitional periods a day. The students are graded with different scales, have varying abilities and multiple learning disabilities, yet the classroom runs in a way that is sort of unbelievable for an outsider. The students are all

well-behaved and do not suffer from any disabilities that usually obstruct the ability to transition smoothly. It is apparent however, that many of these students have strong personalities that often affect their cooperative relationships. Before and after the vast amount of transitional periods, the strong personalities often cause problems when every student does not get what he or she wants.

Some of these issues occur in terms of line order, instances outside of the classroom, or just the sort of interference one student is causing for another in terms of academic cooperation. Some recorded behaviors in my teacher research journal are talking over each other and the teacher, getting upset when an activity comes to closure before they are complete, rushing through work to be first at something, speech and communication difficulties in times of trouble or annoyance and actual time spent on task.

To help alleviate some of these problems, the teacher has some current management strategies in place. Some of which include reminding the students to "be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker," using a warning and checklist system and verbal teacher warnings and reminders. During the last week of my placement, one student who had been developing a behavioral problem was put on an individualized behavioral plan to address specific issues in she was having in the resource room.

Post-intervention Observations

Response Records: Behavioral Speedometer

The first method of intervention was the use of individual behavior speedometers (Stensaas 2009). The students were each given a speedometer and asked to use the same color coding techniques as my previous placement. The "too slow" portion of the

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speedometer was colored yellow, the "too fast" was colored red and the "just right" was colored green. Each student was to color their own speedometer to be laminated. The speedometer was placed on the top corner of each student's desk. After being placed, I stood in front of the classroom and explained the concept of what each color meant, at this time, it was also important to let the students know that their speedometer was their business and only for themselves. They were not to worry about anyone else's, and no one else would worry about theirs. Also, it was important to state that although they were not to worry about another person's speedometer, and that their actions could possibly affect the way a particular student is feeling. The students were instructed to move their arrow as they saw fit for the circumstance, and that if intervention was needed (when the arrow was on yellow or red), they would be privately addressed by the teacher.

Upon explaining the concept and demonstrating behaviors that would warrant each, some students asked for further explanation. One student asked, "Why are we using these?" I responded, explaining that it was to help their full time teacher and myself better understand how they are feeling so we can make changes and adjustments when they are not feeling "green." Another student asked when they were going to use them, followed by how. My response was that the students were allowed to adjust their speedometers throughout the entire school day, whenever they felt a change in their own mood or behavior, and they would be used every day I was in the classroom.

Day one of implementation, a student, Cassandra took another student's paper, when the teacher asked her to give it back and take hers out instead, she threw the paper and started scribbling on her own. In the midst of scribbling she moved her arrow to red. I approached her desk and asked her what was wrong. Cassandra responded by saying,

"I'm mad because I wanted that one." I asked her what would make her feel better and she said she didn't know. I asked her to clear her desk and put down her head and think about what she could do to feel better. After two minutes I approached the desk and asked what she had decided. She responded by saying, "I was just mad." I told her sometimes, doing what you know is right, even though it may not be what you want, is the best thing. She said, "I know, and I'm feeling better now." She moved her arrow back to green and began to work. Another instance occurred when a student was hitting his hands on the desk. The loud noises were upsetting Kyle, so he covered his ears. He moved his arrow to red and moved to the back of the classroom. I approached him and asked if he thought this was a situation he needed help with or a case where he could responsibly resolve it on his own. Kyle approached the student who was hitting his desk and told him the loud noises were hurting his ears and asked if he could please stop. The student apologized to Kyle, and he returned to his seat, and a green arrow.

On the second week of implementation, Kyle entered school and immediately moved his arrow to red. I approached his desk immediately and asked him if he was alright. He informed me that it had nothing to do with school, but it made him not want to be in school at all. I asked him if he wanted to talk about it. Kyle informed me that his cat had died the night before and he did not sleep at all, he also said that he was very sad. We talked about good memories of his cat, and all of the positive things he could remember. When the conversation came to an end, he said, "I didn't think I was going to feel better, but it helped to talk about it." I asked Kyle if he wanted to share the news with his classmates, and he said yes. He told his classmates at circle time, and then told them some of the good stories we shared. Afterwards he returned to his seat and moved his

arrow to green, he said, "Talking about it made me feel so much better because I could talk about the good things instead of my bad night." Even after only the second week of implementation, it was becoming apparent that this method did not only serve as means of intervention for the students, but for teachers as well. It was becoming easier to anticipate a problem, as well as intervene. This was particularly true with situations that most times the teacher would not even know existed.

On the third week of implementation a first time occurrence happened, a student used the behavioral speedometer and worked out the problem with a classmate, not teach intervention was required. During seat work, a student moved his arrow to red. Jessica asked Mark what was wrong. Mark told Jessica that the squeaky noise her shoes were making was making it hard for him to think. Jessica apologized to Mark, and said she did not even realize she was doing it. Mark thanked Jessica for apologizing and moved his arrow back to green.

Student response remained positive, and many students who were previously introverted in terms of their feelings opened up to be able to work through daily interruptions. There were multiple instances when problematic behaviors were able to be resolved prior to transitional periods. Also, when returning from a location other than the resource room, some students were able to identify that there was a problem outside of the room and have it resolved before beginning academic work in the resource room. The students seemed to respond positively to the idea of being able to pick how to resolve their bad feelings. Within limitations, students were able to decide if they wanted to take a two minute head down rest, go to the bathroom, talk with a friend or talk with a teacher. In different circumstances that arose, the students chose different methods of coping. As

the implementation continued, I informed the students that it was my goal to make sure that before any student left the room, and following the re-entry, that I wanted students to all have their arrows on green. The students seemed to really take that to heart, and if I was working on something immediately before we were leaving so that I did not see if their arrows had changed, they would inform me that they needed help before they left. The student response was extremely positive, and it was easier from the teacher perspective to understand when a student was having a problem, by being able to identify the problem, it was easier to solve the problem.

Response Records: Student Journals

Student response journals were used to give student an outlet to convey feelings about specific times of unease during transitions and interruptions in the daily schedule. The students each wrote in their journal as an introduction to the concept in response to how they were feeling at that particular moment. They were to refer to their speedometer and coordinate their journal to their speedometer. As a class we went through step by step and discussed how to write in your response journal. This method was used in order to give the students who had communication troubles and trouble talking about their feelings a chance to express themselves with a multi-sensory approach. For this method, the students could use preprinted pictures, writing and drawing to express feelings. After the introduction to the writing process the students wrote in response to a few different situations. These situations included when the third grade students had to spend the morning in their regular education classroom while the second graders were testing, in response to a day with schedule interruptions and my last day in the classroom.

The first time the students wrote, they needed a little bit of guidance on how to

take care of picking an emoticon and filling in the blanks. Some of the students liked that they could draw what they had written about on the back. The students had mixed feelings in regards to writing. Upon further reflection, I realized that although there was minimal writing involved, many students did not like the idea of writing. I realized this may be a problem because a lot of the students were in the resource room for additional help in language arts skills.

Some notable student responses were in regards to the change in daily schedule and transitional periods being interfered with due to state testing. For instance, one student wrote that he was happy that he could spend the whole morning in his regular education class, because it was more fun, and because he liked not having to move around so much. In reaction to the testing, another student stated that she did not like staying in the regular education classroom because they are working on practice testing materials and the test is making her mad.

By the third use of the student response journals, students were more comfortable with using the journals. They all had a chance to write in response to the fact that I would be leaving, and they would be working with their full time teacher and classroom aide all the time again, and that the routine would be changing back to how it was before I had come in to the classroom. One student wrote, "Miss T is leaving on Friday and I am sad," I asked the student why he was worried and he said, "I am going to miss you, and you helped me feel better when I was sad." Another student said that she was "worried," when I asked the student to write why, she wrote, "I want to keep using my speedometer."

Many of the student journals wee hard to decipher without help from the student

explaining what they had written. The varying disabilities that these students have limit their ability to write clearly and cohesively. Without teacher intervention, students seem a little bit lost with the freedom of writing and the self-consciousness of misspelling and keeps them inhibited with what they were writing. While the students seemed to respond positively to the concept, the follow through seemed more teacher led and less independent. Students relied on me to guide them step by step, and the freedom of the student response journals became more like a guided lesson. In this particular placement, I would say the students were excited about the response journals, but they did not serve the purpose that I expected, for the students to independently evaluate their feelings about the school day and diverse school settings.

Response Records: Student Questionnaire

Similarly to the questions asked in my first placement, the students were asked questions before implementation of any transitional behavioral interventions on their feelings about the classroom climate and community. Students who showed concern prior to interventions, were asked the same questions again after the implementation of new strategies.

Some of the student who displayed any types of concern with the ideal classroom setting had concerns with feeling comfortable talking to their friends and teachers, their friends are encouraging and feeling like their classmates are concerned for their well-being. After implementation of behavioral modifications, students were asked the same questions. All students asked responded positively to the implementation strategy. One student responded positively to all except that he did not always try his hardest after implementation, he said it was because "I was distracted when you first got here because

I wanted to know more about me." Because of this student's disability, I was not surprised by this statement, but the honesty intrigued me. As I continued with the questionnaires, the student responded positively to the increase in classroom community. Another student said she felt more comfortable in the classroom, like her friends and teachers cared that she felt happy all the time.

The students responded positively identifying that all instances they were concerned with prior to thesis intervention strategies were resolved with the techniques used to support the study. Aside from the response to student questionnaires, the result seemed obvious to the teachers. Any sort of behavioral problems that were occurring seemed to diminish, and the excessive amount of transitional periods were occurring more smoothly because teachers were aware of how the students were feeling, and could address any sort of troublesome behaviors or feelings quickly.

Findings

Placement One: Full Day Regular Education Kindergarten

After implementation of all three strategies offered, to foster easier transitional periods for young and inexperienced students, response suggested that with positive behavior supports, students are more likely to successfully navigate diverse school settings while displaying desirable behavior and attitude.

The students responded positively to all areas of intervention, and the benefits were clearly visible in the totality of the classroom. In my teacher research journal, visible disturbance during transitional periods largely decreased in frequency. Students were more likely to work collaboratively to help fill the class bucket, and work together to solve tattles on their own. Students remained in charge of their personal

responsibilities, but often exceeded expectations to help their fellow students. Also, the dynamic of the classroom shifted in the sense that, students were more likely to approach the teacher in regards to positive interactions with their classmates in hopes of being bucket fillers, and not be bucket dippers.

While the implementation of tattling-versus-telling suggests that students were responsive to solving some problems on their own, there was no concrete evidence to display rather than written documentation of student conversations. The amount of tattling has diminished drastically, and that data suggests that the students were grasping the concept and responding positively.

The implementation of bucket filling resonated extremely well with the students. They were verbally excited to help fill the bucket, and visibly motivated to be a supportive classmate in hopes of doing so. There was also a sense of responsibility and apprehension to not be a bucket dipper. While many professionals are hesitant to implement token economy based reward systems, this was concrete and visible evidence of a positive reaction to the new concept. There is also hesitation about negative consequences, like bucket dipping, but the full time teacher and I agree that to reward good behavior, it is okay to give consequences for undesirable behaviors. The concept of having both aspects allows children to feel a sense of responsibility for both behaviors, and motivates and associates positive behaviors with rewards. The concept of a class bucket enforces teamwork and collaboration and working toward a common goal. By working together, the students gain a sense independent and group responsibility.

The data collected suggests that students respond well to a tangible reward, and that a sense of responsibility affecting themselves as well as others serves as both

intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The decrease in tattling and the substantial amount of pom-poms in the class bucket served as evidence of a positive classroom reaction.

Although these methods may seem unconventional in the aspect of transitional periods, the behavior supports of community and positive classroom environment allow for cooperation during and throughout diverse school settings. Giving these young and inexperienced students the ability to collaborate toward a common goal motivates each student to do their best, not only for the personal benefit, but the benefit of the whole class as well. Rather than arguing with each other and racing to leave, data suggests that students were driven to work together to finish tasks more quickly and smoothly. Tattling reduced significantly during times that students were transitioning from seat work to circle, and centers to outside of the classroom activities. Team building in terms of bucket filling allowed for evidence of collaboration and teamwork from whole group to independent work and independent seat work to get ready to leave the classroom.

Data suggests a significant reaction to the methods of implementation, and the positive influence on transitional periods. Students were quicker to complete work, more well behaved in the hallway and more likely to self-assess their behaviors in order to display more desirable behaviors.

Placement Two: Second and Third Grade Resource Room

After implementation of two means of student self-monitoring and regulation to control unease during transitional periods, student response suggests that students respond positively to behavior support strategies. Students responded with an open attitude to both the student response journals and the self-monitoring speedometer.

The response to the behavioral speedometers exceeded my expectations. Data

suggested that students were more likely to talk about their feelings and address problematic situations. Prior to intervention strategies, data showed that students were likely to internalize feelings of being upset and annoyed, which would often turn into behavioral problems. After implementation, data shows that students were more likely to talk about and work through their problems before they had a chance to escalate. Also, by having students be able to address their feelings and concerns in a way in which they could be addressed, it was easier to make sure all students were in a positive mood prior to and immediately following transitional strategies. In this class, the excessive amounts of transitional periods seem to not be the cause for upset, yet the interactions between students and student to teacher, that caused upset and lack of cooperation prior to or following transitional periods. Data shows that after the implementation of the behavioral speedometer students were more likely to show willingness to get help for a problem they are having, and less likely to show defiance toward a task.

Unlike other implementation strategies, the use of student response journals seemed not to be beneficial in addressing the issues at hand. The students were enthusiastic about the idea, but the data collected shows that the concept of free writing was lost on students who were diagnosed with disabilities in terms of reading and writing. The students relied on teacher prompting and when prompted to free write, often wrote about circumstances unrelated to transitional periods. The students were willing to write and tried their hardest, they liked the concept, but from the data collection end, the journals did not seem to aid in alleviating transitional interruptions.

Chapter Five

Culmination of the Study

Findings and Implications

As summarized in chapter four, through the implementation of my research study I was able to conclude that by providing students with positive behavioral supports, transitions can occur more smoothly. The methods used suggest that students respond positively to the idea of cooperation, self-assessment and choice of management in order to foster positive transitional periods. Throughout diverse school settings, children respond positively to intervention strategies that require minimal teacher intervention. By allowing children to work together and be able to self-assess, it is easier to identify a problem and correct troublesome behaviors before transitioning from one activity or place to another. With proper introduction and implementation, students are likely to explore new concepts. Through questioning and exploration, both young students and students with special needs responded positively. With visual and tangible reminders and a multi-sensory approach, students are able to discover the new techniques in multiple ways. Morrissey 2010 states that with teaching intervention strategies, acknowledging expectations and offering behavior supports, the majority of students will react positively. With observations and evidence collected, including the methods of teacher research journal, color coding, tattling-versus-telling, bucket fillers and behavioral speedometers, data conducted in this research process supports Morrissey's claims.

This chapter will provide a brief summary of the implementation of the study, the results, conclusions and implications for continued and developing methods on how to provide behavioral supports to foster positive transitional periods.

Summary and Conclusions

The intention of this study was to examine how positive behavior supports could foster successful transitional periods for inexperienced and special needs students, throughout diverse school settings. Prior to implementation of any behavioral support methods, anecdotal notes were kept to assess the current classroom climate. After observing the current management strategies and identifying troublesome behaviors immediately prior to and following transitional strategies. Lack of cooperation and teamwork seemed to be the biggest problem for the inexperienced kindergarten students, and defiance, for unrelated reasons, seemed the most troublesome for the second and third graders. To meet the needs of all different students, I used multiple methods, incorporating a multi-sensory approach in both settings. Students in the kindergarten class were actively engaged in collaboration and cooperation because it benefited not only themselves, but the entirety of the class. In the resource room, students responded well to the fact that they could identify when they were having troubles or concerns, and could deal with it as they saw fit. To initiate interest in the concept of self-assessment, the students needed to be actively involved in every step of the process. By creating a multi-sensory approach, students of different ages and abilities could all find their place in the methods implemented. By sparking children's interest with innovative and new ways to manage old problems, they are more likely to be driven to be an active part of the plan. Hogan & Pressley (1997) state, "A key feature of the scaffolding process is that the tutor provides just enough support for the learner to make progress on her or his own," (as cited in Moen, 2007, p. 277). Moen (2007), continues in saying that if a teacher provides students with adequate scaffolding, and supports them with choices that will ultimately

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end in the right decision, it is beneficial to let students explore new concepts to arrive at conclusions. Using scaffolding and promoting positive behaviors allows for students to display more positive behaviors. In the case of this study, the positive behavior supports and scaffolding were introduced in a method that would promote students to display ideal behaviors before, during and after transitional periods.

By giving children methods to identify, assess and manage behaviors, they are more likely to be in a positive and comfortable environment while the atmosphere and activities are changing. Inexperienced or young students and students with disabilities including behavioral issues often function similarly in times of uncertainty (Stormont 2005). Offering multiple behavioral intervention strategies gives a teacher the chance to reach a vast range of students. "What children are taught, how they are taught and the way the curriculum is structured has been found to student achievement, the quality of social relationships in class, interest in learning and students' perceptions of themselves as learners," (Perry and Weinstein 1998, p.184).

Implications for the Classroom

The notes kept in my teacher research journal suggest a significant decrease in interruptions during transitional periods. In both classroom settings, by managing behaviors prior to transitions, lessons seem to go more smoothly. In the notes taken prior to intervention strategies, data showed that students were more likely to have a difficult time transitioning if they are experiencing difficulties with other students or within their own personal context. By giving students way to manage their behaviors and assess their feelings in order to be in a positive and productive mood, students were more successful navigating diverse school settings.

The implementation of new concepts to manage longstanding issues gave students the chance to feel actively engaged in their own progress, as well as the totality of collaboration toward a class goal in new ways. Starting a new activity with a positive attitude gives students a chance to feel proud and successful within each separate activity. The concepts of tattling-versus-telling, bucket filling and behavioral speedometers gave students the chance to not only feel responsible for their actions, but assess and manage some problems on their own. By giving the students context and guidelines to help them decipher what was important and what was not, there was less need for teacher intervention and more time for students to work cooperatively. This seemed to impact students in a way in which instead of racing to complete work individually before transitioning, they were concerned first about their well-being immediately followed by the well-being of their classmates.

Notes kept show a decrease in tattling and observations of students working to solve their own problems, suggest that, even with inexperienced students, providing scaffolding allows for success at any level. Similarly, the decrease in rushing and racing toward other activities and locations suggests that students are more concerned with working together to be a bucket filler, than to race into a transition and be a bucket dipper. Likewise, in an older grade level, and for students with disabilities, the behavioral speedometers served as a means of assessing themselves and noticing when classmates were feeling uneasy. Students became more aware of themselves and the people around them which also supported teamwork and collaboration, thus supporting a positive environment throughout a multitude of settings.

This study allowed me to see that no matter what age, ability, disability or grade

level, provided with proper scaffolding and support, all students can succeed throughout transitional periods. It appears that just like the vast differences in the way in which students learn curriculum, there needs to be differentiation in methods of behavioral support. This research has allowed me to see that some students function better independently, while others work better while collaborating. Similarly, some students liked to talk about issues they were having, while others just wanted recognition and down time to clear their heads. The multiple methods provided, allowed me to see that students were aware of their own problems and inconsistencies with the classroom community; because of this, they were eager to participate in activities to help better these issues.

The goal of the techniques implemented was to improve student outlooks and feelings about themselves, their classmates and the classroom climate. In doing so, the goal was to provide an atmosphere wherein students felt more comfortable among and throughout a multitude of dynamic school settings. Intertwined were theories of character education, to develop characteristics within each student that becomes second nature in fostering transitional development in every context of the students' day.

Implications for Future Research

The goal of this study was to provide differentiated methods of behavioral support to foster positive transitional periods throughout diverse school settings. By doing so, a multitude of students would be able to benefit, including but not limited to young and inexperienced students and students with disabilities. Although the study was conducted in multiple settings, the lack of research time in each restricted the amount of methods possible to implement. The possibility of more than one intervention strategy met the

needs of students within one class with different ability levels.

To further the development of this study, I would like to have a long enough time to introduce at least five intervention methods within one class. I would give the students adequate time to get to know the concept and feel comfortable using it. By the end of the introduction of each, I would like to allow the student to choose what method they felt most comfortable using, and use that strategy to manage their behaviors with self-assessment. I would like students to be able to use the methods interchangeably as they saw fit. All methods would be geared to fostering a positive classroom environment before, during and after transitional periods so that students felt more comfortable with ever changing school settings. I feel that this would support a stronger study because providing students with a feeling of individualized support structures would serve as differentiation. By allowing students to pick and choose methods according to their feelings and a given situation would give students the ability to practice multiple outlets of behavioral management. I think this would make for a broader based and more well-rounded study because I could look for patterns in how the students use multiple methods, when they are used, how often and what the students seem most comfortable with. I would also like to keep records of how the students developed by the end of the year. Would the underlying concept of character education allow for students to manage behaviors independently and successfully without implementation of tangible behavior supports?

Although time restraints served as a large issue in the limitations to the study, the main goal was met. Students were able to assess themselves and find means of altering behaviors in order to successfully navigate transitions with a positive attitude. By keeping

the classroom climate and community supportive and positive, undesirable behaviors diminished during transitional periods. The students seemed to really grasp the concept that there was a difference between what was worth being genuinely upset about, and what you could try and resolve quickly. Similarly, students were able to assess and manage a behavior before transitioning, allowing them to fully engage in activities following transitional periods.

During my last week of student teaching, I looked over to see a student who looked a little bit upset. In response to a speedometer arrow on red, I approached a student to help her solve her problem. As I walked over, I squatted down beside the desk and said, "Carla [pseudo name], what is the matter? Why is your arrow on red." Carla looked at me and said, "Whoops, I meant to move it back to green." I asked her if she resolved her problem on her own and she replied, "Using the arrow helped me realize, not everything is worth getting so upset about. Sometimes you should just get over it." I asked her to keep explaining and she said, "When I feel better, so do people around me and then everything seems more fun." At this point, I had felt like the study, implementation and goals of the research were really settling. I knew at that moment, that at least one student had benefited from what the goal of this research was. By providing students with behavior supports, a positive classroom environment can foster easier transitional periods.

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Appendices

Appendix A: *Student Questionnaire One*

<div align="center">Student Questionnaire One</div>

For me the <u>classroom</u>...	Yes	No
Is cooperative	☐	☐
Is friendly	☐	☐
Is encouraging	☐	☐
Is supportive	☐	☐
Is fair	☐	☐
Is safe	☐	☐
Lets me share opinions		

My <u>teacher</u>...	Yes	No
Gives me extra time when I need it	☐	☐
Is understanding	☐	☐
Helps with my problems	☐	☐
Recognizes good work	☐	☐
Is fair	☐	☐

Appendix B: *Student Questionnaire Two*

Student Questionnaire Two

When I am at school I feel like I am part of a community.
     Always   Sometimes   Never

My classmates treat me the way I deserve to be treated.
     Always   Sometimes   Never

I treat my classmates how they deserve to be treated.
     Always   Sometimes   Never

My classmates notice my good work.
     Always   Sometimes   Never

I try my hardest in school.
     Always   Sometimes   Never

I behave and follow rules.
     Always   Sometimes   Never

The teacher makes the classroom feel "fair."
     Always   Sometimes   Never

I feel comfortable enough to talk to my teacher and classmates about my feelings.
     Always   Sometimes   Never

Appendix C: *Tattling-Versus-Telling Self-Assessment Charts*

What is "Telling?"	What is "Tattling?"
Helping to keep someone <u>OUT</u> of trouble!	*Trying to get someone <u>INTO</u> trouble!*
- If someone is hurt	- Trying to get someone into trouble
- If someone is sick	- Something that is not an emergency
- If someone is in danger	- Something that does not involve you
- If someone is lying, cheating or stealing	- Something you can first try to solve on your own
- If it is an EMERGENCY	- Trying to be the boss

Appendix D: *A Student Guide on How to be a Bucket Filler*

HOW CAN YOU HELP FILL THE BUCKET?
-By saying nice things to your friends
- By helping your friends and teachers without being asked
- Being kind to yourself and others
- Using kind words
- Doing your best work
- Setting a good example

Appendix E: *A Student Guide on How to Avoid Being a Bucket Dipper*

| HOW DO YOU BECOME A BUCKET DIPPER? |
|---|
| |
| - By teasing your friends |
| - By breaking classroom rules |
| - By hurting someone's feelings |
| - By putting your hands or feet on any other person |

Appendix F: *Behavioral Speedometer*

Speedometer Cut-Out

Instructions: Glue onto construction paper for added durability. Cut out the speedometer and arrow. Fasten the arrow with a brad to the X in the middle of the speedometer. Instruct the child to move the arrow to the speed he/she is feeling.

Too Slow

Just Right

Too Fast

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90

Stensaas (2009)

Resource
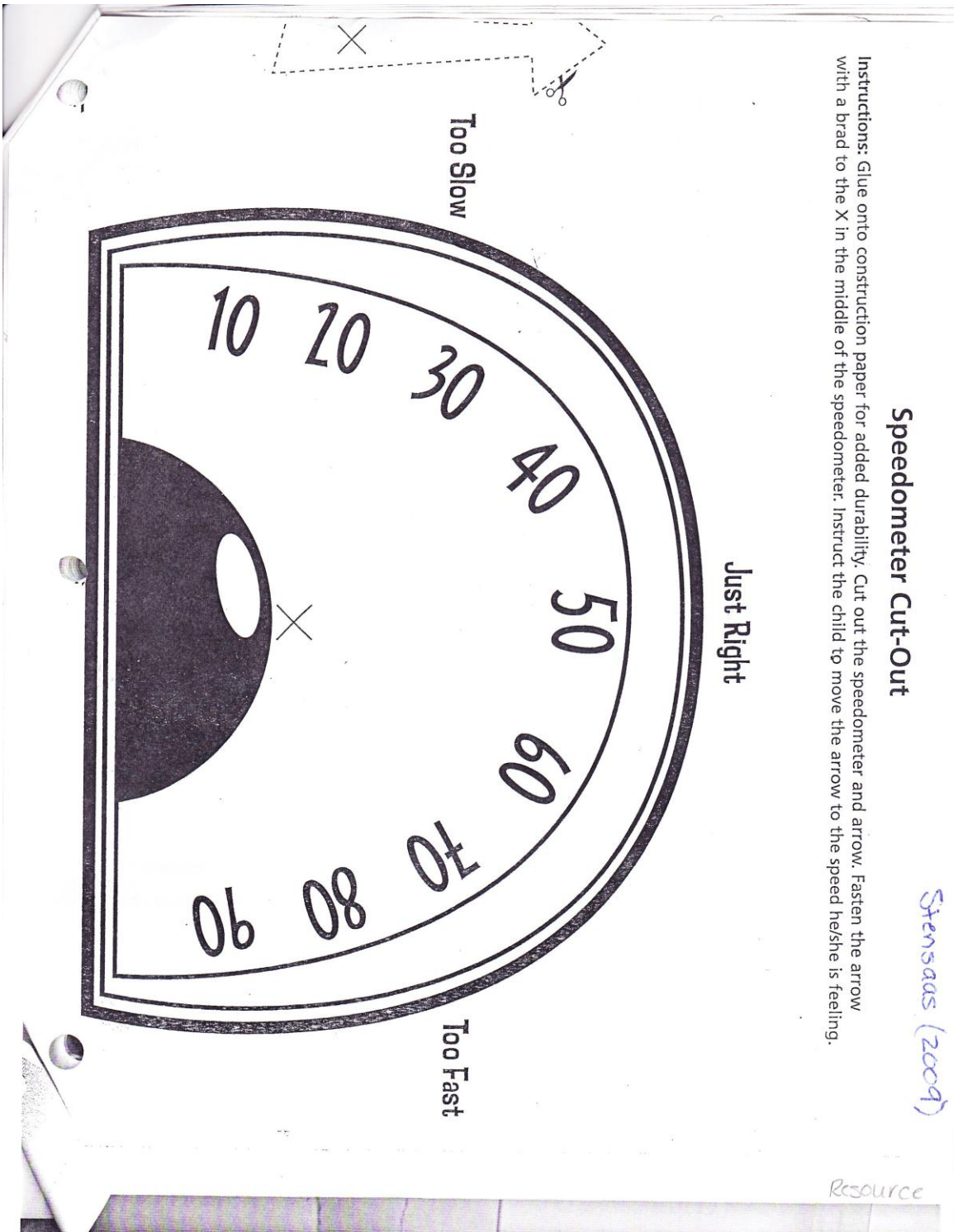
Appendix G: *Student Response Journal Template*

How do you feel today?

Today I felt _____

because _____

_____

_____.

Tell me some important things that happened during school today..._____

_____

_____.

Irritated   Happy   Surprised

Worried   Sad   Angry