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Increasing social relationships among kindergartners using peer reporting

Christine A. Gruenler
Rowan University

INCREASING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG KINDERGARTNERS USING

PEER REPORTING

by
Christine A. Gruenler

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ABSTRACT

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2001/02
Dr. Randall Robinson
Masters of Science in Teaching

This study focused on increasing the social relationships of kindergarten students

using peer reporting. This method encouraged children to use social skills on the

playground. In addition, the students were encouraged to report the observed use of

social skills to be recognized by their classmates. The subjects of the study included an

experimental group of 20 kindergarten students and a control group of 21 kindergarten

students, both located in an elementary school in a rural area of southern New Jersey.

Social relationships were measured by the number of tattle tales on the playground,

whereas tattletaling indicated that there was diminished social relationships. The students

were subjected to six social skill lessons. Following playground activities, the students

met as a group and were encouraged to report the use of social skills that were observed.

A leaf was placed on a bulletin board tree with the child's name and social skill used.

The data consisted of the number of tattletaling before and during intervention. The

results appear to indicate that the students exposed to the intervention decreased the

frequency of antisocial peer reporting. The children who were not exposed to the

intervention experienced an increase in antisocial peer reporting.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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Aggression, depression, and academic failure are some results that occur with poor social interaction among peers. Children exposed to an intervention of positive peer reporting showed a decrease in tattletaling, indicated an increase in social relationships, while children not exposed to the intervention exhibited an increase in tattletaling.

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CHAPTER 1

SCOPE OF STUDY

Introduction

One doesn't have to look very far to see that violence in our schools today is a

major concern. In the past, schools were a safe haven for children. In recent years,

however, schools have been experiencing increasing violence and aggression among

students (Likona, 1991). Unfortunately, many schools today have to address the issue of

the increase in aggressive behavior and return their schools into the safe haven where

children don't have to feel threatened or in danger (Likona 1991).

Research has shown that problems with childhood interpersonal relationships

could be an indicator of academic problems as well as delinquency and adult criminal

behavior. Such problems can also be a factor in psychological problems (Cashwell,

Skinner, & Smith, May 2001). Findings have demonstrated that children who have poor

social skills and difficulty getting along with peers are at risk for school adjustment

problems (Parke, Harshman, & Roberts, Sept/Oct 1998).

In addition to violence and aggression, children who lack the necessary social

skills to maintain positive social interactions are at risk of being rejected by their peers.

These children who are rejected are more likely to engage in antisocial behavior as well

as academic difficulties. Rejection by peers can result in loneliness and depression

(Segrin, & Flora, July 2000).

School administrators and teachers have the integral job of keeping their schools safe and maintain an environment conducive to learning and positive social interactions (Williams, Sept 2000).

Statement of the Research Problem

Violence and aggression, loneliness and depression, social maladjustment and academic failure are only a few of the results that occur with poor social interaction among peers. The current study examined whether peer reporting of pro-social behaviors increase the social relationship among the students in a kindergarten classroom.

Purpose of the Study

Teachers are responsible for maintaining a conducive learning environment that includes children interacting with one another on a regular basis. Classroom management techniques vary from teacher to teacher, however, facilitating the social relationships among children may be the most effective way to gain control of the antisocial behavior that occurs in the classroom. This study examines a method of providing teachers with a tool for improving the behavior in their classroom while giving students the necessary skills to become productive, socially acceptable members of society.

The purpose of this quasi-experimental study was to determine whether peer reporting of pro-social behaviors increases social relationships among kindergartners by decreasing the frequency of tattletaling.

Statement of the Hypothesis

Kindergarten students who experience the intervention of social skills training and positive reinforcement through peer reporting will exhibit a reduction of antisocial peer reporting, or tattletaling, to indicate an increase in positive social relationships.

The children who did not receive the previous intervention will not exhibit a reduction of antisocial peer reporting to indicate no increase in positive social relationships.

Limitations of Study

While the ideal experimental conditions would be to chose a random sample, that is not possible given the constraints of the study. This limitation would prevent the results from being generalized to populations outside of the participants used in the study.

The study included two intact kindergarten classes. A limited number of subjects in the study infringe on the external reliability of the study. While only one class was presented with the intervention, it is possible that results may vary given the presence of a larger number of subjects.

In addition, time constraints prohibited the researcher from conducting more in-depth research and may not account for changes that may occur once the data has been collected. This limitation did not allow the researcher to conduct an extensive study that may provide a different outcome and consideration for additional factors and in depth research on subjects and community.

Factors such as gender, social economic status, special needs, and environmental features had not been taken into account. These may provide explanations for findings

with regards to the individual class or students. Such factors may have changed the outcome of the study.

An additional limitation was the absence of the researcher at the site of the data collection. While competent teachers were trained to collect adequate data, the researcher was not present to oversee the intervention, therefore relying on the report of the classroom teacher as to the progress of the experiment. Lack of consistent communication could affect the reliability of the study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are key terms noted throughout the current study.

Antisocial behavior: any behavior elicited by a student that is not a socially accepted behavior, for example, hitting, name-calling, pushing and shoving.

Antisocial peer reporting: refers to the students telling the teacher that a peer has exhibited a behavior that is antisocial; commonly referred to as tattletaling.

Generalization: refers to the goal of the children exhibiting positive social interactions with their peers over time and place.

Positive peer reporting: refers to the student telling the teacher that a peer has exhibited a behavior that is pro-social.

Precorrection: the process of instructing the children of proper behavior prior to the elicitation of the antisocial behavior. For example, "remember your manner in the lunchroom" on the way to the cafeteria.

Pro-social behavior: is any behavior elicited by a student that is socially acceptable, for example, saying "thank you", waiting your turn, and helping others.

Social relationship: the positive or negative interaction between students.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Educators have a role in furthering moral development of responsible adults in the

society in which they will live (Williams, Sept 2000). Character education is a priority

that came about because of the pressure to explore student learning and child

development in areas such as self-esteem, higher order thinking, cooperative learning and

multicultural education (Williams, Sept 2000). This study hypothesized that kindergarten

students that are subjected to a social skills intervention using peer reporting will show an

increase in prosocial behaviors. Children who are not subjected to an intervention will

not show an increase in prosocial behaviors.

Implications of Social Rejection

Among the important skills of character education is that of social relationships

with peers. Chandler et al states that peer interaction has been related to general

development progress, communicative competence and academic success (Chandler,

Lubeck & Fowler, Summer 1992).

Negative behaviors, particularly aggression, are related to social rejection.

According to Johnson, Ironsmith, Snow and Poteat, parents and teachers should not

assume that the child will grow out of negative behavior patterns. They state that these

behaviors tend to predict how well a child is accepted in subsequent years. Teachers can

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use verbal instruction as well as modeling and reinforcement to teach prosocial skills and prevent a child from becoming rejected by their peers (2000).

Findings have shown that problems with social relationships can be a predictor of future education and psychological problems including achievement, juvenile delinquency and adult criminal behavior (Cashwell, Skinner, & Smith, May 2001).

Children who have strong social skills and high quality stable friendships enter school with the high expectations for success (Johnson, Ironsmith, Snow & Poteat, 2000). According to Ladd, Price & Hart, elementary school children who behave aggressively are more likely to be socially rejected by other children (1988). Among four-year-old children, aggressive behavior is more of a problem for children who do not interact much with peers and who show fewer positive, prosocial behaviors that might offset the aggression. If a child is somewhat aggressive, but also is socially active and shows some prosocial skills, he or she is not necessarily rejected by peers (Curto, 1996). According to Newcomb, Bukowski, & Pattee, (1993), popular elementary school children are above average in sociability and cognitive skills and are below average in aggression and withdrawn behavior. Children form their opinions of their peers based on how they behaved the first year of school and that first impression stayed with them (Denham and Holt, 1993).

Influence of Social Acceptance on Academic Performance

Lower levels of social acceptance in kindergarten are predictive not only of deficits in classroom social skills and work habits in the first and second grade, but also of lower academic performance as assessed by grades and standardized achievement test scores in the first and second grade. Social skills and academic competence influence

each other consistently over time. A pattern emerged where academic competence causally influenced social competence which, in turn, causally influenced academic competence (Park, Ross, Harshman & Roberts, Sept/Oct 1998).

Children who are not actively rejected, but who are experiencing other forms of social difficulties, may also be at some risk for early academic difficulties. These are children that are perceived by their peers as being disruptive and often starting fights, but they are also leaders in the peer groups. They are both strongly liked and strongly disliked by their classmates (Park, Ross, Harshman & Roberts (1998).

In a study by Park, Ross, Harshman & Roberts (1998), these "controversial" children, while in kindergarten, showed some degree of difficulty in first and second grade classroom behaviors, and the controversial boys performed more poorly than popular boys in second grade mathematics.

Social competence and continuity of peer relations, as well as the degree of support that a child receives from teachers, parents and especially classmates, are all important influences on the child's success in school. Establishing close ties with classmates can provide kindergartners with a sense of security they need for exploring and coping with new surroundings (Johnson, Ironsmith, Snow & Poteat, 2000). Children who are more accepted by peers are less anxious and like school better as the year progresses (Ladd, 1990).

The Need for Teacher Praise and Attention

According to Johnson, Ironsmith, Snow and Poteat, teachers need to provide positive reinforcement for interactions with peers, particularly with praise and attention. Modeling ways for children to initiate or join in existing activities with their peers may

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result in better peer acceptance and later social adjustment. Children who spend too much time interacting with adults have fewer opportunities to benefit from interaction with peers. They suggest face-to-face interactions among students rather than student-teacher-student mediation should be encouraged (2000).

Parke, Harshman and Roberts state that social skills and academic ability influence one another (Sept/Oct 1998). In their study they examine the relationship between social relationships and academic success. The research indicates that children who have difficulty getting along with peers are at risk for later school adjustment problems (Parke, Ross, Harshman, & Roberts, Sept/Oct 1998). Children are protected from early academic problems by stable acceptance by peers.

Children who are experiencing other forms of social difficulties beside rejection from peers may also be at some risk for early academic difficulties. Park, Ross, Harshman & Roberts, (Sept/Oct 1998) suggest that there may be a more systematic connection between peer rejection in the early school years and problematic classroom behavior than there is between peer rejection and actual academic performance outcomes.

Psychosocial Problems

Poor social skills are thought to make people vulnerable to psychosocial problems. In a study, Segrin and Flora tested a social skills deficit vulnerability model of psychosocial problems (Segrin, & Flora, July 2000). This study was conducted with 118 college freshman who were moving at least 200 miles away from their hometown and making a transition to their first year of college. Participants completed a pre-test and post-test measure of social skills and psychosocial problems including depression, loneliness, and social anxiety. Results show that lower social skills scores were

predictive of a worsening of psychosocial problems over the course of the study. Social skills interacted with stressful life events to predict changes in depression and loneliness (Segrin, & Flora, July 2000).

Teaching Social Skills

Many children today are entering classrooms without the ability to interact effectively with others (Grossi, Habich, Hackett, & Petersen, May 1, 2000). According to Grossi, Habich, Hackett, and Peterson (May 1, 2000), without proper guidance, children are at risk for aggressive and disruptive behavior, low self-esteem, poor mental health, dropping out of school, low achievement, poor employment history, and many other difficulties. In this study, Grossi, Habich, Hackett, & Petersen (May 1, 2000) conducted action research with two kindergarten classrooms, one second grade class and one third grade class. This research implemented and evaluated a program to teach social skills to improve the capacity of primary age students to cooperatively work, learn, and play both inside and outside the school setting. The researcher introduced each lesson by modeling the pro-social behavior followed by an interactive activity in which students practiced the skill. Results indicated an improvement in designated social skills areas (Grossi, Habich, Hackett, & Petersen, May 1, 2000).

Parent/Teacher Cooperation

Aggressive and antisocial behavior of many children is sometimes related to their family or home environment and interactions. It is essential that teachers involve parents in attempts to help unpopular children become more socially accepted. Information about positive guidance techniques can be made available in parent discussion groups,

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and through newsletters and handouts. Individualized strategies for facilitating the social competencies of specific children can be discussed in parent-teacher conferences (Johnson, Ironsmith, Snow & Poteat, 2000).

Social Skills Integration

According to the Character Education Partnership (CEP), there are eleven principals of effective character education. Among these principles is #3 "effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life "(Likona, Schaps, & Lewis, n.d.). This approach includes planning ways to develop character across subject lines and time and including character education in the academic curriculum (Likona, Schaps, & Lewis, n.d.).

As discussed before, social relationships among peers have many repercussions. As stated in Chandler, Lubeck & Fowler (Summer 1992), peer interaction has been related to general developmental progress, communicative competence and academic success (Curl, Rowbury, & Baer, 1985; Hendrickson, Strain, Tremblay, & Shores, 1981; Ichinose & Clark, 1990; Strain & Odom, 1986). Much research has been conducted on methods to strengthen peer relationships and increase the likelihood of success in all areas.

Peer Monitors

Smith and Fowler (Summer 1984) state, "Classroom peers frequently exert power of one another's behavior." Children may prompt and reinforce desirable behaviors in their peers. They state that classroom peers can serve as powerful sources of

reinforcement in increasing or maintaining both the positive and negative behaviors of their classmates.

In their study, Smith & Fowler examined the effectiveness of a peer-monitored token system on reducing disruption and nonparticipation during a transition period of a kindergarten class for behaviorally impaired children. Results indicated that peer-monitored interventions were successful in decreasing disruption and increasing participation of monitored peers (Smith, & Fowler, Summer 1984). Their research further demonstrated that peer monitors could successfully initiate the token system without prior adult implementation. They suggest that the mere presence of a peer who has served as an intervention agent may cue classmates to engage in desired behavior and may facilitate maintenance of their behavior following termination of intervention program.

Smith & Fowler found that young children preferred a peer managed program rather than a teacher-managed program (1984). Implementation of token systems monitored by peers successfully reduced disruptive rates to the lower averages compared to the teacher-monitored programs.

Since teachers are responsible for monitoring many different aspects of their students, they must divide their attention across the entire classroom. Strain, Cook and Apolloni (as cited in Smith & Fowler, Summer 1984) state that peers may be a better solution to monitor the behavior of their peers since they can do so consistently. In addition, the presence of peers may cue classmates to engage in desired behaviors and may facilitate maintenance of their own behavior (Smith & Fowler, Summer 1984).

In a comparison of two intervention roles, Stern, Fowler & Kohler (Spring 1988) indicate in their study that the role of peer monitor and point earner were both successful

in reducing student's inappropriate behaviors. According to Fowler, Dougherty, Kirby and Kohler (as cited in Stern, Fowler & Kohler, Spring 1988) elementary school children, appointed to monitor classmates on the playground, also reduced their own negative interactions.

In a similar study, Stern, Fowler, & Kohler focused on a comparison of the roles of peer monitor and point earner. This study demonstrated that elementary school children appointed to monitor classmates on the playground also reduced their own negative interactions. They suggested that alternating the roles of the students, social stigmas attached to the children who are in need of treatment are eliminated. This study found that children involved in peer-mediation interventions enjoyed and sought out positions of peer management. The conclude that their study proves to be an attractive and cost-effective solution for reducing inappropriate behaviors during independent work times when the teacher is unavailable to supervise (Stern, Fowler & Kohler, (1988).

Positive effects could occur in the social interactions of older peers in the role as tutor for younger children as well (Gumpel & Frank, Spring 1999). Gumpel and Frank (Spring 1999) examined the effects of cross-age peer tutoring program on the social skills of two sixth-grade and two kindergarten socially rejected and isolated boys. The results showed that the frequency of positive social interactions increased for all four boys, with maintenance of treatment gains following a five-week interval. Gumple and Frank (Spring 1999) demonstrated that "traditional peer tutoring and cross-age tutoring can be expanded to the nonacademic domains of social skills training and that the treatment may positively affect the social skills of both tutor and tutees."

Educational environments are structured so that anti-social behavior is punished rather than encouraging pro-social behavior (Cashwell, Skinner, & Smith, May 2001). In

a study by Cashwell, Skinner and Smith (May 2001), the researchers developed a program in which students reported pro-social behaviors of their peers, and were provided with direct instruction, group reinforcement and progress feedback. This research found that "direct instruction could be used to teach students to report peers' pro-social behaviors and that interdependent reinforcement and publicly posted progress feedback procedures increased and maintained these behaviors" (Cashwell, Skinner, & Smith, May 2001). This study showed an increase in the number of reports of pro-social behavior, but failed to show an increase in social relationships of the students. While their research did not target specific social skills training, they suggests that their method is useful for enhancing generalization and maintenance of recently acquired social skills (Cashwell, Skinner, & Smith, May 2001).

Functional Assessment

According to Foster-Johnson & Dunlap (1993), it is important to gain an improved understanding of the behaviors in order to develop positive and effective interventions. They describe functional assessment as a method of determining the function of the behavior that can be used to establish the basis for an intervention plan that is specialized to the individual or class.

Foster-Johnson & Dunlap (1993) state that many teachers use tangible objects as rewards. These rewards sometimes work but are often insufficient because the strategy does not address the function of the problem behavior or the particular way in which the behavior is associated with the student's environment.

One a function of a problem behavior is identified, interventions might be teaching children an alternative, replacement behavior or modifying the events that are

associated with the consistent occurrence of challenging behaviors so that the events leading to the behavior no longer exist (Foster-Johnson & Dunlap, 1993).

Such factors that may exhibit challenging behaviors include physical factors such as side effects of medication, fatigue, hunger or thirst. Classroom environment including high noise level, uncomfortable temperature, poor seating arrangement and frequent disruptions may provide for behavior problems. Lastly, curriculum and instruction may be inadequate or unsuitable for students. These include few opportunities for making choices, lack of predictability in the schedule, inadequate level of assistance provided, unclear directions and many more (Foster-Johnson & Dunlap, 1993).

Chandler & Dahlquist (2002) state that children behave for three reasons: to obtain something, to escape or avoid something aversive, or to change the level of stimulation. Functional assessment can determine the purpose of the behavior so that teachers can select the appropriate behaviors that will compete with and eventually replace challenging behaviors. They must select intervention strategies that match the function of challenging behavior and that are likely to be implemented by staff (Chandler & Dahlquist, 2002).

Character Education in New Jersey

The state of New Jersey is among the majority of states that has recognized the importance of Character Education. The New Jersey Character Education Partnership (NJCEP) Initiative was announced in January 20 as part of the Governor's State-of-the-State message. The hopes is that this initiative will "assist public school educators to adopt validated character education programs that will meet the developmental needs of

students throughout New Jersey by promoting pro-social student behaviors" and create a "caring, disciplined school climate conducive to learning" (NJCEP, 2001).

In addition to New Jersey, the U.S. Secretary of Education publicly endorsed character education as one way to teach students skills to avoid violence and drugs. A total of thirty-six states and the District of Columbia have received US Department of Education "Partnerships in Character Education Pilot Project" grants. The state grantees are to "form partnerships with local school districts and the community to help youth incorporate good citizenship into their learning experiences." The grants are earmarked to help communities work together to develop curriculum materials, provide teacher training, build community consensus, involve parents and integrate character education into the curriculum (CEP, ND).

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

Teachers have the job of preparing children for the future. This includes the

social skills necessary to function as part of the community and as a social being for the

goodness of bettering themselves. Giving children the tools to get and maintain quality

social relationships among peers has the potential to not only increase the likelihood of

academic success, and decrease violence, but also the ability to be successful as an adult.

Subject/School/Environment

The participants of the study were two intact kindergarten classes. The

kindergarten class participating in the experiment, class A, included 20 children. These

children range from 5 to 6 years old. There were 10 girls and 10 boys.

The second kindergarten class, class B, participating as a control group included

20 children. They also range from 5 to 6 years old. In this class there are 10 girls and 10

boys.

This school was situated in the southern most region of Cape May County, New

Jersey. The school included Pre-Kindergarten to second grade with approximately 400

children.

The district consisted of a population of 16,405 people with the largest percent

between the ages of 35-44 years old. The racial makeup of the population was 85.2

percent white, 10.9 percent black or African American, and 4.9 percent other. The

household was 22.8 percent married couples with children under 18; twelve percent of households were female headed with no husband. Twenty nine and eight tenths percent were non-family households. The number of households total with children under the age of 18 was 35.0 percent. The number of homeowners in this district was 82.1 percent, while 17.9 percent of the population were renters. The average size of an owner-occupied household was 2.59 people and the average size of a renter-occupied unit was 2.51 people. The average salary was $38,911. The population determined to be in poverty status is 4,154 people (US Census, 1990).

Methods

Before proceeding, a letter was sent by the research requesting permission to complete the study. Permission was granted via a written statement by the principal. (see appendix A).

In the study the both the experimental group and control group were observed for a period of one week with no intervention. From both groups the number of anti-social conflicts reported by the students was recorded on a form that recorded the date, number of children absent, the frequency of antisocial peer reporting, and a comments section (see appendix B).

Following the one-week period of baseline recording, the children of the experimental group were trained to report pro-social interactions of their peers. The control group continued in baseline recording. The training involved a 10-minute session with the children, discussing the procedure they would be using to report the behaviors of their peers (see appendix C).

During the intervention period, the teacher conducted a social skills lesson twice a week at the end of the recess period (see appendix D). During this lesson, the children who have been observed by their peers engaging in pro-social behaviors receive positive reinforcement by the teacher and recognition by the class. During the class discussions, the teacher taught the steps necessary for social skills including complimenting, problem solving, waiting your turn, etc. Two social skills were introduced each week for two weeks according to the needs of the students determined by a functional assessment (see appendix E).

In addition, the number of pro-social behaviors was recorded on a "good deeds" tree in which a leaf with the child's name and behavior written on it was placed on a bare branch for visible progress. During this period the teacher continued to record the number of antisocial peer reporting in addition to the number of positive peer reporting.

The social skill of *giving a compliment* was taught during the first initial class meeting to teach the children how to give positive peer reports. This was combined with the social skill, *sharing* (see appendix D). Each social skill followed the following instructional procedure according to McGinnis & Goldstein:

1. Define the skill

2. Model the skill

3. Establish student skill need

4. Select role player

5. Set up role play

6. Conduct role play

7. Provide performance feedback

8. Assign skill homework

9. Select next role player

The second session included the social skill *problem solving* followed by

and *dealing with your anger (*see appendix D).

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The current study focused on increasing social relationships among kindergarten students. The frequency of tattletaling was recorded for five days with no intervention, and ten days after the start of the intervention. It was hypothesized that kindergarten children exposed to the intervention of peer reporting and social skills training would show a decrease in the frequency of tattletaling. Consequently, kindergarten children not exposed to the intervention will not show a decrease in the frequency of tattletaling.

Tabulation of Raw Scores

The frequency of the antisocial peer reporting of the experimental group was recorded for five days without intervention. Table 1 shows the number of children present on each day. It also shows the frequency of antisocial peer reporting for each of the five days in which the baseline data was recorded, and the average frequency per student. Due to the variation in the number of students over the condition, the frequency was converted to a percentage to account for the missing students. On day 1 of the Baseline Frequency of Antisocial Peer Reporting of Experimental Group chart, 29% indicates that the students reported antisocial behavior an average of .29 times each. One hundred percent equals one antisocial peer report.

table 1

Baseline Frequency of Antisocial Peer Reporting of Experimental Class

Day	# of Students	Frequency of Antisocial Peer Reporting	Average Frequency Per Student
1	21	6	29%
2	21	4	19%
3	20	5	25%
4	20	4	20%
5	20	5	25%

The mean of the frequency of the Baseline data is 4.5 antisocial reportings by peers. The mean for the average frequency per student was 23.69%, indicating that the average child tattled 23.69% of one tattletale. The range of frequencies was four to six antisocial peer reports. The range of frequency per student was 19% to 29%.

Table 2 shows the frequency of antisocial peer reporting during an intervention phase. During this phase, the students were encouraged to report prosocial behaviors while being exposed to social skill lessons.

During this intervention phase, the children of the experimental group showed a mean frequency of 2.8 reports of antisocial behavior over a period of ten days.

The average frequency per student was 14.6%. The range in the frequency was one to five reports of antisocial behavior. The range in the average frequency per student during this intervention period was 09% to 29%.

table 2

Intervention Frequency of Antisocial Peer Reporting of Experimental Class

Day	# of Students	Frequency of Antisocial Peer Reporting	Average Frequency Per Student
1	19	5	27%
2	16	2	13%
3	16	2	13%
4	18	1	06%
5	19	4	21%
6	21	2	10%
7	21	2	10%
8	22	3	14%
9	22	2	09%
10	22	5	23%

Table 3 shows the Frequency of Antisocial Peer Reporting of the control class. This class was not exposed to the intervention and continued in a Baseline stage for the entire period of time expanding fifteen days.

During the first five days, the equivalency to the Baseline period for the experimental group, the mean average frequency per student equaled 12.6%. During the Intervention Period of the experimental group, the control group remained at Baseline data with no intervention. The average frequency per student of antisocial peer reporting during this phase was 15.4%. Although this group exhibited a large variability in data frequencies, the overall average of the frequency of antisocial peer reportings was lower than the experimental group.

table 3

Baseline Frequency of Antisocial Peer Reporting of Control Class

Day	# of Students	Frequency of Antisocial Peer Reporting	Average Frequency Per Student
1	19	9	48%
2	18	0	00%
3	20	2	10%
4	21	1	05%
5	20	0	00%
6	19	4	21%
7	20	5	25%
8	20	0	00%
9	21	3	15%
10	19	1	06%
11	21	3	15%
12	20	0	00%
13	19	7	37%
14	20	5	25%
15	20	2	10%

Analysis Related to Particular Purpose of the Hypothesis

The data was analyzed by calculating the percentage of change in the frequency

per student. The frequency per student of the Intervention period of the experimental

group (14.6%) was subtracted from the frequency per student of the Baseline period of

the experimental group (23.6%) to indicate a 9% decrease in per student in the frequency

of antisocial peer reporting. The 9% decrease in the average frequency per student was

then divided by the original average mean of the frequency per student during the

Baseline period, resulting in a 38% decrease in the frequency of antisocial peer reporting

over the Baseline period mean per student.

Likewise, the control group was analyzed by calculating the percentage of change in the frequency per student. The frequency per student during the equivalent period of time as the experimental group intervention was compared with the frequency per student during the equivalent Baseline period. The mean frequency of the Baseline period increased over the time of the Intervention period of the experimental group by 2.8% per student. The increase per student was divided by the original baseline mean per student to indicate an overall increase in antisocial peer reporting by 23% over its original level.

During the Baseline period, the experimental group tattled 11.1% more than the control group. Viewed as a relative percentage, the experimental group tattled 88% more than the control group.

Appendix F shows a comparison between the experimental group and the control group over the fifteen day period. There was a wide range of variability within the control group, however, the graph shows that, during the Baseline period, the experimental group exhibited a lower mean percentage. It is also noted that the control group experienced an increase in antisocial peer reporting from the Baseline period.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study focused on the social relationships of kindergarten students. An

intervention through the use of prosocial peer reporting and social skill instruction was

conducted with an experimental group that measured the frequency of antisocial peer

reportings on the playground. It is indicated that the experimental group experienced a

decrease in the reporting of antisocial peer reporting, while the control group, receiving

no intervention, experienced an increase in antisocial peer reporting.

Summary of the Problem

There are many consequences for young students with poor social interactions

and social skills. Violence and aggression, loneliness and depression and poor academic

skills are a number of results that can affect these children.

Summary of the Hypothesis

The hypothesis stated that children exposed to the intervention would exhibit a

decrease in the frequency in tattletaling, which would indicate an increase in the social

relationships of the kindergarten students and the use of social skills. The children in the

control group would not display a decrease in antisocial peer reporting.

Summary of Procedure

A kindergarten class of 22 children was exposed to an intervention, which included the teaching of social skills and encouraging children to report positive reports about their peers. During the Baseline period, which lasted for five days, the teacher recorded the frequency of antisocial peer reportings, or tattletales. Following the Baseline period, the frequency of antisocial peer reporting was recorded daily for 10 days, during which children were receiving the intervention.

The antisocial peer reporting of the control group was recorded for 15 days with no intervention.

Summary of Findings

In the current study, findings indicated that there appeared to be some success in the intervention of peer reporting and social skill instruction. It was found that the students in the experimental group showed a decrease in antisocial peer reporting by 9% per student and an overall decrease of 38% of the original Baseline mean.

In addition, it was found that the control group exhibited an increase in antisocial peer reporting during the course of the study. This group demonstrated an increase in antisocial peer reporting by 2.8% per student and an overall increase of 23% of the original Baseline mean.

Considering these results, it is accepted that kindergarten students who experienced the intervention of social skills training and positive reinforcement through peer reporting exhibited a reduction of antisocial peer reporting or tattletaling. In

addition, it is also accepted that the kindergarten children who did not receive the intervention did not exhibit a reduction of antisocial peer reporting.

The control group exhibited an increase in antisocial peer reporting. This suggested that when problem behavior is left untreated, the problem might get worse over time.

Conclusion

This study addressed the issue of increasing social relationships among kindergarten students. Through an intervention of prosocial peer reporting coupled with lessons in social skills and positive praise, it was suggested by the data that children could increase their positive social relationships, which could lead to future success in academics as well as social adjustment and healthy friendships.

Implications and Recommendations

This study suggested that teachers could help to facilitate the positive social interactions of kindergarten students by teaching social skills, and encouraging children to use prosocial peer reporting. This intervention can be a useful tool in helping children who may not easily make friends, children who are aggressive towards other students, and many other characteristics of students.

The current study was one of Applied Human Behavior Analysis, therefore, the results are applied to determine its human worth, rather than a statistical significance. As shown by the data analysis of the control group, an important finding of this research also

suggested that if a problem, such as tattletaling is left untreated, the problem can get worse.

The current study showed that there was a decrease in antisocial peer reporting indicating an increase in social relationships through the use of prosocial peer reporting and social skill instruction. Future researchers should expand the study over a longer period of time and with a larger sample. The control group showed a great deal of volatility possible suggesting that the two groups were not equivalent. Baseline data should be recorded for a greater period of time so that the data has the opportunity to stabilize.

A return to Baseline data was suggested to determine whether the data returns to its original Baseline frequencies. This might suggest whether or not the intervention indeed caused the change in behavior, or whether it was due to chance. In addition, repeating the intervention during another time of day would indicate whether generalization of the behavior was exhibited across time and setting.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INTENT/LETTER OF PERMISSION

March 3, 2002

Dear Mr. Sowa,

I would like to ask permission to conduct my thesis research in Middle Township Elementary #1. The research involves using an intervention of peer reporting, social skills and positive reinforcement to increase social relationships among kindergarten students.

The intervention would be performed by Amy Casterline with a control group in Debbie Thornton's class. Both teachers have agreed to participate. There will be minimal involvement and will not negatively interfere with academics. If successful, the research will show that when children learn to compliment each other, problem solve and negotiating among other skills, children will show an increase in positive social relationships.

The study involves collecting data on the frequency in which children tattletale on the playground. Since tattletaling is an indication that there is a lack of social skills in problem solving, for example, the desired result of the study is a decrease in the frequency of tattletaling. This study assumes that if tattletaling is reduced there is an indication that there was an increase in positive social relationships.

Amy Casterline and Debbie Thornton will record the frequency of tattle tales during baseline data for one week. Amy Casterline's class will be exposed to the intervention in which children will be encouraged to systematically praise their peers for using social skills. Amy will offer praise by adding a leaf with the behavior and the child's name on to a "good deeds tree" during a class discussion twice a week for approximately 10 minutes. During this discussing children will role play social skills such as complimenting, and problem solving. Children will be encouraged to use these behaviors through precorrection and praise by the teacher. Children will earn friendship certificates that will indicate to parents the social skills that the children are exhibiting on the playground.

If successful, the intervention will then be offered to Debbie Thornton's class to further prove that the decrease in tattletaling and the increase in positive social relationships is, in fact, due to the intervention.

Research shows that poor social relationships are an indication of academic failure. It is my observation that children may tattletale because they lack the social skills to solve their own problems, seek attention in a positive way, and solicit the teacher's intervention in a conflict. By providing an alternative behavior to tattletaling children are encouraged

through praise and reward to use these behaviors to strengthen their relationships with their peers.

Please consider my request for the use of these teachers and students. If successful, this knowledge will help teachers help their children to become good friends and SUPER CITIZENS in their classroom and school community.

Please find an excerpt from my research proposal attached for more information. This proposal is a work in progress and will be constantly revised throughout the study. If you should have any questions or comments, feel free to reach me at 463-3708.

Thank You,

Middle Township Elementary No. 1

215 Eldredge Road
Cape May Court House, New Jersey 08210-2499
Telephone (609) 463-1900, ext. 204
FAX (609) 463-1901

JOHN J. SOWA
Principal

LANETTA HAMMILL
Vice Principal

May 1, 2002

Dear Fellow Colleague in Education,

It is with extreme pleasure and enthusiasm that I grant permission to Ms. Christine Gruenler to pursue her research using Mrs. Casterline's kindergarten class at Elementary # 1. Such a study can only result in positive outcomes for all involved participants.

From what I know about Ms. Gruenler (Christine) from her previous service to our school as a talented substitute teacher and gifted full-time kindergarten teaching assistant, I am certain that this investigation will be conducted in the utmost professional manner. I wish her the best of fortune in this enterprise.

Sincerely,

John J. Sowa
Principal

APPENDIX B

FREQUENCY OF TATTLETALING DATA CHART

Frequency of Tattletaling

Behavioral definition: tattletaling is defined as the behavior of reporting negative behaviors to the teacher and/or aide.

***Include only the frequency of tattle tales of children from your classroom about other children

Date	Time	# absent	Frequency	Comments
Example 3/4/02	12:30 – 12:45	2		John was absent and he tattles the most

in your classroom. Do Not include tattle tales from or about children in other classes.***

Write any significant comments on the back.

APPENDIX C

PEER REPORTING TRAINING LESSON

Prosocial Peer Reporting Training Session
Social Skills: Giving a Compliment

Objective: At the end of the lesson the students will be able to recognize classmates for positive behavior. The students will be able to use the social skill *giving a compliment* appropriately in an unstructured and structured environment. NJCCC: 3.1:3; 3.1:7, 3.1:8.

Anticipatory Set:
- Ask children "has anyone ever done anything that made you feel good, like sharing or taking turns?"

Input:
- Define Compliment: A compliment is when you say something nice about someone else or to someone else.
- Tell children that giving a compliment makes other people feel good.

Modeling:
- Set up the scene, use the environment of the playground: Tell children that you are going to pretend "Johnny" just let you in front of him on the slide.
- Have a student be "Johnny"
- Think the steps for giving a compliment aloud:
  1. Decide what you want to tell the other person *"I want to tell Johnny that he's a good friend for letting me in front of him"*
  2. Decide what to say *"I think I'll say 'Johnny, you're a good friend for letting me in front of you on the slide."*
  3. Choose a good time and place *"I'll tell him as soon as he comes down from the slide."*
  4. Give the compliment in a friendly way *"Johnny, you're a good friend for letting me in front of you on the slide."*

Guided Practice:
- Ask children what are other times when it would be appropriate to give a compliment, i.e. A classmate has done really well on a project; Mom or dad makes a good dinner; you like what someone is wearing.
- Choose 2 volunteers to act out another scenario of their choice (if appropriate)
- Set up role play; talk about the environment and what happened
- Conduct role play
- Provide performance feedback; correct if necessary, or praise
- Choose 2 more volunteers and repeat role play

Checking for Understanding:
- Ask children how they feel when someone compliments them.
- Ask children what are additional places or situations that you might compliment someone.

Independent Practice:
- Tell children that they should use compliments to make other feel good and reward them for good behavior.

APPENDIX D

SOCIAL SKILLS LESSON PLANS

Social Skills: Dealing with Anger

Objective: At the end of the lesson the students will be able to recognize classmates for positive behavior. The students will be able to use the social skill *dealing with anger* appropriately in an unstructured and structured environment. NJCCC: 3.1:3; 3.1:6; 3.1:7; 3.1:8.

Anticipatory Set:
- Ask children if anyone has done anything that made them feel good, like giving a compliment, or taking turns.
- Offer an example : *I saw Johnny let Susie in front of him in line today.*
- Write the behavior on a leaf and have the recipient of the compliment place it on the tree. Praise. Repeat if necessary.
- Ask children *"what would you do if a friend talks behind your back"*

Input:
- Tell children that dealing with anger means that you find a solution to help you when you are angry.

Modeling:
- Set up the scene, use the environment of the playground or indoor recess: Tell children that you are going to pretend that a friend has been talking behind your back.
- Think the steps for problem solving aloud:
  1. Stop and count to ten.
  2. Think about your choices:
     a. Tell the person in words why you are angry *"I could tell him that I feel hurt when he talks behind my back."*
     b. Walk away for now *"Maybe the teacher will let me run an errand so I can cool off."*
     c. Do a relaxation technique. *"I could take deep breaths and count to 10."*
  3. Act out your best choice. *"I think I will walk away for now"*

Guided Practice:
- Ask children what are other times that it would be appropriate to deal with your anger.
- Choose 2 volunteers to act out a scenario of their choice (if appropriate)
- Set up role play; Talk about environment and what happened
- Provide performance feedback; correct if necessary, praise

Checking for Understanding:
- Ask children how they would feel if they dealt with their anger.
- Ask children what other places they might deal with their anger.

Independent Practice:
- Encourage children to deal with their anger.
- Encourage children to compliment classmates for dealing with their anger.

Social Skills: Problem Solving

Objective: At the end of the lesson the students will be able to recognize classmates for positive behavior. The students will be able to use the social skill *problem solving* appropriately in an unstructured and structured environment. NJCCC: 3.1:3; 3.1:6; 3.1:7; 3.1:8.

Anticipatory Set:
- Ask children if anyone has done anything that made them feel good, like giving a compliment, or taking turns.
- Offer an example : *I saw Johnny let Susie in front of him in line today.*
- Write the behavior on a leaf and have the recipient of the compliment place it on the tree. Praise. Repeat if necessary.
- Ask children *"what would you do if you forgot your lunch money"*

Input:
- Tell children that problem solving means that you find a solution to a problem that you may have.

Modeling:
- Set up the scene, use the environment of the playground or indoor recess: Tell children that you are going to pretend that you forgot your lunch money
- Think the steps for problem solving aloud:
    1. Stop and say "I have to calm down" *"I need to calm down. I think I will count to ten."*
    2. Decide what the problem is. *"I forgot my lunch money"*
    3. Think about different ways to solve the problem. *"I could call my mom. I could charge my lunch"*
    4. Choose one way *"I think I will charge my lunch"*
    5. Do it. *Mimic charging your lunch.*
    6. Ask yourself "How did this work?" *I think that worked well, I got to eat lunch and I can bring in my money tomorrow."*

Guided Practice:
- Ask children what are other times that it would be appropriate to problem solve.
- Choose 2 volunteers to act out a scenario of their choice (if appropriate)
- Set up role play; Talk about environment and what happened
- Provide performance feedback; correct if necessary, praise

Checking for Understanding:
- Ask children how they would feel if they had a problem and were able to solve it by themselves.
- Ask children what other places they might problem solve.

Independent Practice:
- Encourage children to problem solve.
- Encourage children to compliment classmates for problem solving.

Social Skills: Sharing

Objective: At the end of the lesson the students will be able to recognize classmates for positive behavior. The students will be able to use the social skill *sharing* appropriately in an unstructured and structured environment. NJCCC: 3.1:3; 3.1:6; 3.1:7; 3.1:8.

Anticipatory Set:
- Ask children if anyone has done anything that made them feel good, like giving a compliment, or taking turns.
- Offer an example : *I saw Johnny let Susie in front of him in line today.*
- Write the behavior on a leaf and have the recipient of the compliment place it on the tree. Praise. Repeat if necessary.
- Ask children *"how would you feel if you wanted to play with the soccer ball at recess and no one will share with you"*

Input:
- Tell children that sharing means that two people can either take turns or play with something together.

Modeling:
- Set up the scene, use the environment of the indoor recess: Tell children that you are going to pretend you are playing with a puzzle, but other children want to play too.
- Choose a student to be the other child.
- Think the steps for sharing aloud:
  1. Decide if you want to share something *"If I don't share, Johnny won't get a turn, but if I do share then we can both have a turn. I think I'll share."*
  2. Decide on the person with whom you want to share *"Well, since Johnny asked me first to share, and I can only share with one other person, I think I'll share with Johnny.*
  3. Choose a good time and place *"Maybe I'll do the puzzle on the rug instead of my desk so there will be more room"*
  4. Offer to share in a friendly and sincere way *"Johnny, would you like to do the puzzle with me?"*

Guided Practice:
- Ask children what are other times when it would be appropriate to share, i.e. share crayons, share a treat, share a game or toy.
- Choose 2 volunteers to act out a scenario of their choice (if appropriate)
- Set up role play; Talk about environment and what happened
- Provide performance feedback; correct if necessary, praise

Checking for Understanding:
- Ask children how they would feel if someone shared with them.
- Ask children what other places they might share.

Independent Practice:
- Encourage children to share.
- Encourage children to compliment classmates for sharing.

Social Skills: Giving a Compliment

Objective: At the end of the lesson the students will be able to recognize classmates for positive behavior. The students will be able to use the social skill *giving a compliment* appropriately in an unstructured and structured environment. NJCCC: 3.1:3; 3.1:7, 3.1:8.

Anticipatory Set:
- Ask children "has anyone ever done anything that made you feel good, like sharing or taking turns?"

Input:
- Define Compliment: A compliment is when you say something nice about someone else or to someone else.
- Tell children that giving a compliment makes other people feel good.

Modeling:
- Set up the scene, use the environment of the playground: Tell children that you are going to pretend "Johnny" just let you in front of him on the slide.
- Have a student be "Johnny"
- Think the steps for giving a compliment aloud:
    1. Decide what you want to tell the other person *"I want to tell Johnny that he's a good friend for letting me in front of him"*
    2. Decide what to say *"I think I'll say 'Johnny, you're a good friend for letting me in front of you on the slide."*
    3. Choose a good time and place *"I'll tell him as soon as he comes down from the slide."*
    4. Give the compliment in a friendly way *"Johnny, you're a good friend for letting me in front of you on the slide."*

Guided Practice:
- Ask children what are other times when it would be appropriate to give a compliment, i.e. A classmate has done really well on a project; Mom or dad makes a good dinner; you like what someone is wearing.
- Choose 2 volunteers to act out another scenario of their choice (if appropriate)
- Set up role play; talk about the environment and what happened
- Conduct role play
- Provide performance feedback; correct if necessary, or praise
- Choose 2 more volunteers and repeat role play

Checking for Understanding:
- Ask children how they feel when someone compliments them.
- Ask children what are additional places or situations that you might compliment someone.

Independent Practice:
- Tell children that they should use compliments to make other feel good and reward them for good behavior.

APPENDIX E

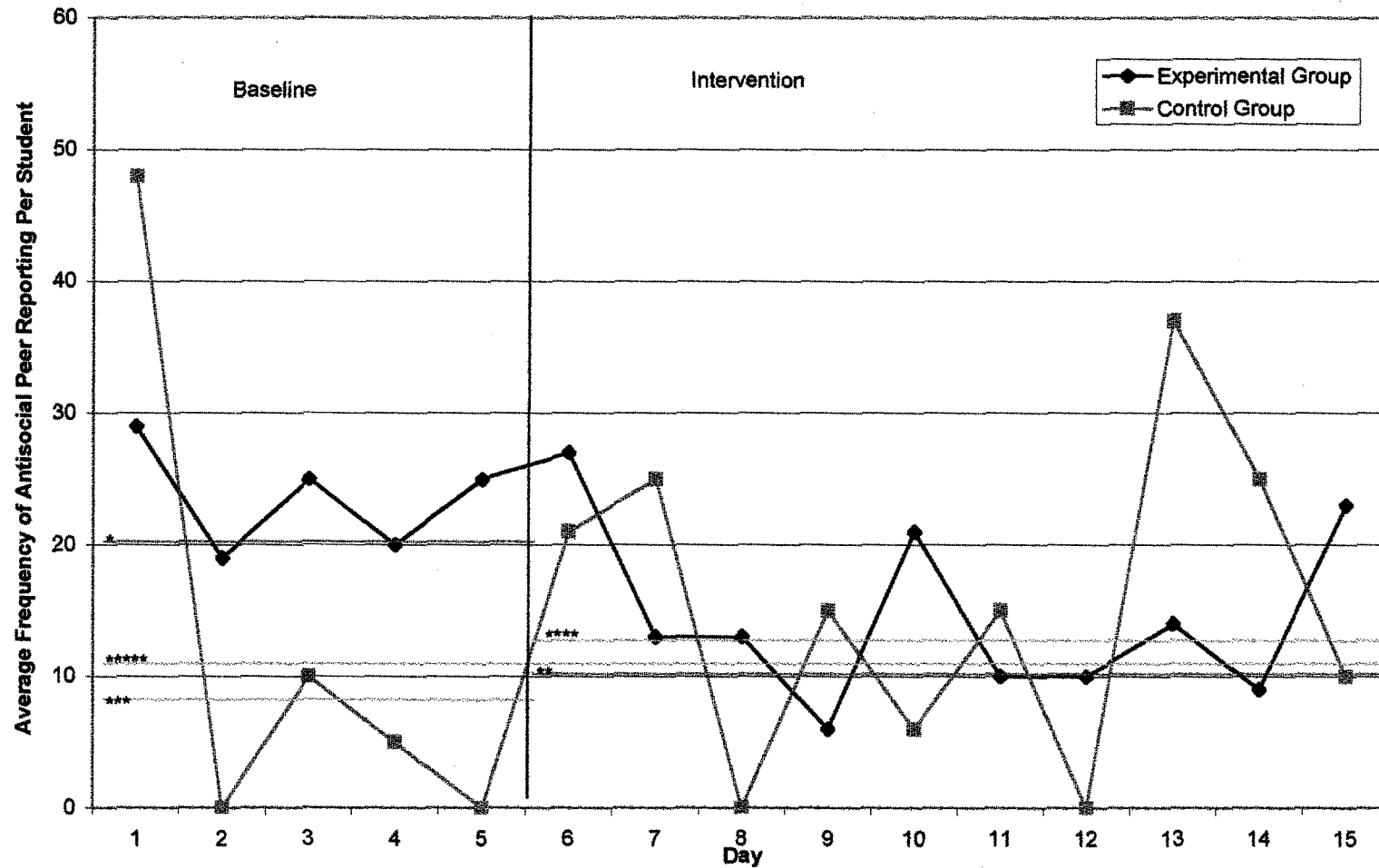ABC ANALYSIS CHART

ABC Analysis Chart

Condition	2 Antecedent	1 Behavior	3 Consequence
Baseline			
Intervention			

APPENDIX F

AVERAGE FREQUENCY OF ANTISOCIAL PEER REPORTING IN A
KINDERGARTEN CLASS

AVERAGE FREQUENCY OF ANTISOCIAL PEER REPORTING IN A KINDERGARTEN CLASS

* Mean Baseline Percentage per Student = 23. 6   *** Mean Baseline Percentage per Student 12.6   ***** Mean Percentage per Student = 14.5
Mean Intervention Percentage per Student = 14.6   ** Mean Intervention Percentage per Student 15.4

VITA

NAME   Christine Ann Gruenler

DATE/PLACE OF BIRTH   January 13, 1976
                                        Cape May Court House, NJ

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL   Middle Township Elementary
                                        Cape May Court House, NJ

HIGH SCHOOL   Middle Township High School
                                        Cape May Court House, NJ

COLLEGE   Montclair State University
                                        Upper Montclair, NJ
                                        Bachelor's of Arts in Psychology
                                        Minor in Criminal Justice

GRADUATE   Rowan University
                                        Glassboro, NJ
                                        Masters of Science in Teaching
                                        Elementary Education