

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE USE OF PRAISE IN THE UPPER
ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

By

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Manuscript Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

Kristen D. McGuire. A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE USE OF PRAISE IN THE UPPER ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM; (under the direction of Dr. Daniel Baer) School of Education, Liberty University, October, 2013

This qualitative study uses a hermeneutic phenomenological approach and data analysis to explore how teachers use praise in multiple sixth grade classrooms. Both novice and veteran teachers are involved in the study. The study examines the differences between these novice and veteran teachers' use of praise. The study also examines how teachers use praise differently for effort versus achievement and the pros and cons of praise in the classroom. In addition, the study provides reasoning for why teachers use praise in the upper elementary classroom. The study utilizes various data collection techniques to focus on how and why teachers use praise and the usage's associated results. Data analysis is conducted via triangulation, coding, and extensive memos over a period of two months. The study also includes implications for further research studies.

Descriptors: *Praise, elementary classroom, teacher, hermeneutic, phenomenological study, effort, achievement*

DEDICATION

To my mom, who has proven to me that there is never a timeline for achieving your dreams, and to my dad whose eyes lit up at that mere mention of my interest in a doctorate degree. The light in his eyes is what lit the fire in my heart that led me to here.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family. My mom and dad provided me with a wonderful upbringing that offered me unconditional love as well as endless opportunities in life. They also provided me with this opportunity and stood by me the entire journey. For that I am forever grateful. My husband provided me with the encouragement and emotional support that led me to complete this project even while being pregnant with our first child. His passion to continue his education after witnessing my journey made my project even more meaningful. My sweet little girl reminds me every day the reason I

am in this particular field and has given the ultimate purpose to my research. We must foster the learning of children so they may grow up to be happy and successful.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Praise is any written, verbal, or tangible reward for which something positive is the outcome (Mangin, 1998). Many students who participate in general education elementary classrooms often encounter a variety of opportunities in which they may receive directive praise from a teacher. This praise may be directed towards effort or achievement (Trolinder, Choi, & Proctor, 2004).

In American educational forums, educators have recognized that praise is used as a way to motivate students in the classroom (Trolinder, Choi, & Proctor, 2004). Research has shown that this praise needs to be used carefully and specifically (Trolinder, Choi, & Proctor, 2004). Many behaviorist approaches to teaching value rewards as a way to get students to respond positively to any task set forth by the teacher (Moore et al., 2010). These classroom management styles that include such rewards are classified as assertive discipline (Moore et al., 2010). Researchers agree that using praise for achievement rewards are often more effective than those for effort. Students become more focused on the final product and strive to succeed in every task they are assigned (Burnett & Mandel, 2010).

Praise has always been an important motivating tool, but classroom educators need to know how the most effective ways to use it. Some researchers have argued that praise could be counter-productive if misused (Zentall & Morris, 2010). Then, naturally, it does not have the effect on students that was initially intended. Also, praise may

discourage the willingness of a child to perform a more difficult assignment. Praise in the form of verbal or tangible rewards should be viewed as a continuing process of encouragement (McIntyre, Kyle, & Moore, 2006). Thus used effectively, praise can improve motivation, self-reliance, self-esteem, autonomy, and achievement (Haimovitz & Henderlong, 2011).

When educators use praise effectively it expresses positive emotions about a student's effort or performance. It can exist in the form of encouragement used to build confidence, and it also realizes that different students require different forms of praise. Used appropriately, praise offers appreciation for student's individual characteristics and helps develop the student's self-confidence. Appropriate praise is specific and focused; it offers information about a particular student's competency and performance (Simonsen, Myers, & DeLuca, 2010).

Teachers who use praise successfully vary their tone of voice and reinforce their message by using appropriate body language (Haimovitz & Henderlong, 2011). By doing so, students are able to reflect on the task at hand. Effective praise also can create intrinsic motivation in which students are motivated to do things for their own reasons (Haimovitz & Henderlong, 2011). Their prior work is related to their current successes, and they are encouraged to act further in order to achieve even more success.

Alfie Kohn (2001) believes that praise is, more often than not, used ineffectively. Praise that is used ineffectively can be unsystematic and random. It also unintentionally can interrupt current work on a task and break concentration. Ineffective praise also is

viewed as having inappropriate focal points. For example, ineffective praise may attribute success to a factor such as luck, or it may use the ability of another student for the basis of judging achievement of another. This poor focus also causes praise to place too much emphasis on extrinsic motivation when a student is simply completing a task to gain a reward (Kohn, 2001). Throughout this ineffective use of praise, the teacher is viewed as an all-encompassing authority who manipulates students for desired outcomes.

When praise is used ineffectively, it can lead to much greater problems. Praise that lacks focus can cause a student to answer questions tentatively in fear of displeasing the teacher. Also, students may be more motivated to engage in simpler tasks that will result in quick and positive feedback than more challenging tasks (Cleaver, 2007). Furthermore, the ineffective use of praise can cause students to become greedy in that they refuse to aid others for fear that they will have to share a reward or positive feedback. These students may have little desire to work with students who are less concerned with pleasing the teacher (Dweck, 2000). With a steady routine of praise, a student may not be motivated if this routine suddenly ends or changes and can lead to the deterioration of that student's performance (Kohn, 2001).

In addition to Mangin's definition of praise, Brophy (1981) had recognized that to praise a student is "to commend the worth of or to express approval or admiration" (Brophy, 1981, p.5). Most teachers undoubtedly use praise as a positive reinforcement tool in their classroom. By using praise in this manner, teachers are able to motivate students to behave and perform in specific ways. Brophy (1981) believes, however, that

this use of praise is impractical. His research actually revealed a great amount of teacher praise is not in the form of purposeful reinforcement. Instead, Brophy suggests that the students themselves extract it. Over time students actually guide and cause the teacher to praise and motivate them (Brophy, 1981).

The motivation to succeed is a crucial component of a successful learning environment (Dweck, 2000). Teachers play large parts in offering students the support they need for higher levels of achievement through the use of praise (Bartholomew, 2008). The basic premise of this research study agrees that one component of student effort and achievement is verbal cueing and tangible rewards or praise. The use of praise can either encourage or damage students' self-confidence, directly influencing academic effort and achievement. As a result, this study addresses how and why teachers should use praise in the elementary classroom. More specifically, the focus of the study will be to determine how novice and veteran teachers differ in their use of praise in terms of praising for effort and achievement.

Problem Statement

As previously noted, praise includes verbal responses that have anything to do with applauding academic performance or effort (Mangin, 1998). Such examples may include; "Good work," "Great job," "Way to go," and "I like how hard you are working." However, some students receive very little praise from their teacher based upon the teacher's individual teaching style (Simonsen, Myers, & DeLuca, 2010). These

students may be left with the responsibility to motivate themselves to do better. While praise is not the only reason for achievement, it can be a large motivating tool.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers used praise in general education elementary classrooms and by analysis of these usages to gain a deeper, richer understanding of the use of praise in elementary classrooms from the teacher's perspective. This study is important because in the context of elementary education, praise previously has been shown to be a strong motivating tool as well as a possible obstruction to intrinsically motivated, self-directed learning (Dweck, 2000). In the attempt to understand the concept of praise, this project will be a carefully planned exploration of the way teachers use praise in general education elementary classrooms.

Interaction between students and teachers in the classrooms can positively or negatively affect students' attitudes and behaviors (Covey, 2009). Without doubt, the positive interaction among teachers and students leads to increased academic growth. On the other hand, negative engagements have the ability to demolish student confidence (Covey, 2009).

Often the pre-adolescent interpretation of the surrounding world can complicate interactions among teachers and students. Covey (2009) has described the interpretation of the real world as a problem created by the differences among the "social" and "true" mirrors (Covey, 2009, p. 152). By way of metaphor, the social mirror is the sum of all

self-perceptions and those it helps. Conversely, the true mirror is the accurate perception held by an individual.

As a result of both mirrors, teachers can create the perfect classroom environments using praise, but may still fall victim to students' perceptions that are discordant with teacher instruction (Covey, 2009). This study extends previous research by investigating how teachers use praise to both motivate students and increase achievement levels amidst preexisting student perceptions.

Significance of the Study

The reasons for this study are primarily practical in nature. The particular aim was to gain new perspectives and knowledge on praise in the elementary classroom. In terms of practicality, elementary students are involved in direct instruction time for upwards of thirty hours a week, so teacher behavior may have a strong positive or negative effect on a student's learning environment (Marcotte & Hansen, 2010). These interactions among students and teachers make up the basis of teaching and learning.

Teachers communicate facts and procedures to students, but they also serve an even larger role. Teachers can be viewed as role models, second parents, therapists, and even facilitators (Marzano, 2011). Therefore, teacher influence reaches a much wider breadth than instruction alone. Teachers are a glimpse into the future in the way that they prepare students for what is to come. This particular research study investigated a component of the verbal and emotional interaction that takes place in the elementary classroom. This verbal and emotional interaction is known as praise.

Praise for effort and achievement has the ability to motivate students and encourage self-efficacy (Marzano, 2011). This research study is significant because it proposes to offer insight into how praise may positively correlate to academic effort and achievement. The study also provides to both novice and veteran teachers the “hands-on” details of how to successfully use praise to increase effort and achievement.

Research Questions

The following specific research questions guided this research study:

1. How do novice and veteran teachers differ in their use of praise?
2. What are the pros and cons of praise in the classroom?
3. Why do teachers use praise in the classroom?

Definitions

This study will use a variety of terms frequently. The terms are defined in Table 1, following.

Table 1

Definitions

Term	Definition
Content-area teacher	A teacher who teaches one or two specific subjects to grade level students
Feedback	A specific reaction to an individual’s performance

Hermeneutics	The study of a theory and practice of interpretation
Phenomenology	An approach that focuses largely on the study of consciousness and the objects of direct experience
Praise	Any positive reinforcement that includes verbal or tangible acts of approval and admiration
Teacher efficacy	The factors that contribute to the confidence teachers must have to successfully reach their goals related to their classroom

Limitation and Delimitations

Limitations. The limitations of this particular study stem from the small sample group of teachers used to conduct research. The teachers chosen were from one grade within one district. This small sample size possibly limited the generalization of findings to other teachers in other grades.

Delimitations. The study only focused on the use of praise by upper elementary teachers. Given the knowledge of elementary teachers' tendency to use praise, this sample group provided a strong background into how teachers use praise and the reason for it.

Research Plan

This research is a qualitative hermeneutical phenomenological study with a two-sided approach. The functioning word in the definition of phenomenological research is

to *'describe'*. The primary focus was to describe as precisely as possible the phenomenon of praise, abstaining from any pre-given framework, and instead remaining true to the specifics (Groenewald, 2004). First, teachers' use of praise was investigated over the course of three months. Observations and data-gathering tools such as videotaping and interviews were implemented in six sixth grade classrooms across one district. Secondly, this study was conducted in attempts to gain a deeper, richer understanding of the use of praise in elementary classrooms from the teacher's perspective. Throughout the study, interviewing, videotaping, observing, professional journals, and running records were used. The interviews allowed the questioning of the veteran and novice teachers about when they intentionally use praise, why they use praise at those times, and what they think and have observed about the role of praise in the classroom. The interviews also allowed for the perspective of how different teachers use and view the usefulness of praise.

A phenomenological qualitative approach is the most appropriate design for this study. The reason a phenomenological approach was chosen is for its ability to focus on how praise as a phenomenon is used in the elementary classroom (Groenewald, 2004). As stated by Welman and Kruger (1999) "the phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved" (p. 189).

The phenomenological approach focuses on the differences between novice and veteran teachers. As a researcher, behaviors of students when receiving or not receiving

verbal and tangible praise will be observed. Qualitative research and a phenomenological approach allow for the observing of these behaviors and to drawing conclusions directly related to both the positive and negative outcomes of praise.

Preview of Subsequent Chapters

The second chapter includes a review of literature. This review of literature provides the context for this research study and in turn serves to validate it. Many critical topics appear in the review of literature, such as differences among novice and veteran teachers, the tiers of teaching expertise, and the four key components of praise. The third chapter describes the methodology of the study. This portion contains the research questions, information on the setting and participants, and explains how the data were collected for this study. The fourth chapter provides an in depth analysis of the many data collection tools used and the findings in the study. The final chapter delivers a summary of the entire study and the many recommendations for further research opportunities.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

One of the many reasons for this dissertational study of how teachers use praise in upper elementary classrooms appeared during many pertinent articles; one particularly poignant piece was, “Caution – Praise Can be Dangerous.” While working with school age children, Dweck (2008) determined that students who were verbally praised for their ability level in terms of academics were less likely to undertake larger academic risks. These particular students were complacent to the point of participating only in assignments that did not require any additional effort. This category of academically inclined students was later greatly unsettled by higher order thinking activities, especially as the objectives became more advanced.

These students, when asked to discuss the specific activity, often had a distorted view on their actual participation. They believed that greater portions of the objectives had been accomplished than what had occurred. On the other hand, another set of students was rewarded for their effort. This category of students developed more confidence to work on high order thinking assignments. They also were motivated longer when attempting new tasks and were more honest in the conversations about their actual participation in these assignments (Dweck, 2008).

Currently, teachers in childhood education are a vital piece in the development of student mindsets. Teachers are multi-faceted in the way that they are far more than just a teacher to each and every one of their students. Within the development of student

mindsets is the use of praise (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Teacher praise may produce different effects on student perceptions. This variation is due to the different tiers of expertise acquired by each individual teacher. In addition to the classroom, students' personal belief systems and self-confidence also are formed by outside influences such as the local community. Therefore, performance may be either improved or obstructed based on the interpretation of the student.

This study, then, took as its control purpose to determine precisely how teachers use praise and whether or not it improves or obstructs effort and achievement. Praise and positive feedback, of course, have been proven to be a positive component of increasing self-confidence, effort, and focused behaviors (Cameron & Pierce, 1994; Deci & Ryan, 2004; Dewar, 2008). Praise from a teacher is a key component in motivating students, but the use of praise does not always lead to an optimistic result with all students. Thus, praise is often a possible obstruction to students when it does not seem genuine. This observation is equally true when the praise is interpreted as a judgment or is unjustifiable (Bartholomew, 2008; Dweck, 2008; Henderlong & Lepper, 2002; Kohn, 1994). Students perceive the intentional and unintentional outcomes of praise in varying ways, which depend upon a student's self-perception (Baumeister, Hutton, & Cairns, 1990).

Praise can be an intrinsic motivator when carefully and appropriately developed. When using praise to activate student perseverance, four key components must be present. These four elements include student performance attributes, student self-efficacy, task competency, and teacher expectations (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002).

When broken down into these four key components, teacher praise for manipulated attributes of student performance encourages intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, praise for frivolous tasks may lead to poor responses to praise (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002). Students encountering praise during actions with task autonomy attain higher levels of motivation. Teachers using praise to provide positive information about competency leads to higher levels of student self-efficacy, while praise that insinuates feedback only on the basis of comparison weakens student self-efficacy (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002). When teachers set high expectations and realistic goals, they encourage intrinsic motivation. Objectives defined as being either too high or too low can obstruct intrinsic motivation.

Theoretical Framework

In the previous literature on this topic, multiple studies provide intriguing arguments for the use of praise in the classroom. Past researchers have viewed praise as a positive behavioral management technique. Ferguson (1992) believes praise keeps students on task and ready to work as well as creating a desirable classroom atmosphere. Another prior researcher believes that praise can provide encouragement and support, and can help teachers establish friendly personal relationships with students (Brophy, 1981).

Many other foundational studies in education actually concern praise and how it should be used. These studies prove highly useful when discussing the use of praise in the classroom. Vygotsky's widely accepted social development theory describes the way in which children must be individualized to their zone of proximal development, within

which each child should be given appropriate feedback and instruction based on the child's mental capacities and frustration levels (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky believed that children should always be challenged, but they also should be given the support they need so that they do not reach an unhealthy level of frustration (1978). This support can be in the form of verbal and tangible praise.

Maslow believed that human beings were motivated by unsatisfied needs. He discussed how lower needs had to be satisfied before higher needs could even be acknowledged. Included in Maslow's hierarchy of needs are more general needs, which consist of physiological, safety, love, and esteem (Maslow, 1943). Some of these components are easily addressed through verbal or tangible positive reinforcement. This hierarchy of needs must be satisfied in order for people to act without selfishness. As people satisfy these needs, they eventually move towards growth self-actualization. The satisfaction of these needs is ideal, while the prevention of satisfaction often leads to poor behavior (Maslow, 1943).

Recent literature tends to confirm these same trends. In Knestrict's (2005) study, he was often ill willed towards school and his peers. It was not until he had a positive experience in community college that he was able to move towards growth and self-actualization. Drawing from Knestrict's experiences, educators are very similar to students in the way they deal with satisfaction. Just as with students, if educators become unsatisfied, they will begin to blame certain people or situations and will ultimately leave an environment they are unhappy with. Thus, educators and students alike need to remain

highly self-motivated. As educators have a huge impact on student learning, if they are unhappy, student achievement will suffer negative repercussions (Marzano, 2011).

Brookhart (2008) described the way in which directive feedback aids educators in creating a maximum learning environment. To do this, she offered an example of both helpful and unhelpful feedback on an actual student's writing sample. Brookhart (2008) believed good feedback involves focusing on both the work and process of student learning. She believed all educators should relate their feedback to specific goals.

By using her own personal experience, Brookhart (2008) was able to come up with techniques for the teacher to use when giving feedback. These techniques can be used to help convince students of their learning abilities. Bandura's (1986) theory is centered on the concept of self-efficacy. Brookhart (2008) hopes to develop self-efficacy in students by providing them with directive verbal feedback that leads to learning. Brookhart (2008) carefully pointed out the importance of monitoring a student's reaction to self-efficacy comments. At times, certain comments proved more or less successful than others, and various adjustments must be made to cater to student responses. Self-efficacy prompts will range in value. For example, certain tasks may be harder than others and thus educators must provide verbal feedback that is more directive and encouraging to the student. Also, verbal feedback should be used differently with each student. Teachers must maintain a level of credibility by offering comments that fit specific student needs.

In an administrative setting, teachers and administrators must also encourage each other and provide positive feedback to one another. This positive feedback enables coworkers to better communicate and motivate one another, as student success is so closely linked to their educational environment. For managerial expert Peter Drucker (2006), “Every knowledge worker in a modern organization is an ‘executive’ if, by virtue of his position or knowledge, he is responsible for a contribution that materially affects the capacity of the organization to perform and obtain results” (p. 5). Therefore, administrators and teachers alike are able to ‘effectively’ contribute to students and coworkers’ performance through meaningful feedback.

Other literature also provides intriguing arguments related to the negative effect of praise used by teachers in the elementary setting. According to Alfie Kohn (2001), in classrooms where praise was overused, “Support and approval are made contingent on doing what pleases or impresses the teacher--precisely the opposite of the unconditional acceptance and empowerment that children need” (p. 25).

Review of the Literature

Defining Praise

According to Brophy (1981), “Praise is defined as commending the worth of or to express admiration” (p. 5). He continued by noting that, “when teachers praise students, they do not focus on the degree of success achieved but rather express positive affect and they place the students’ achievements and behavior in context by giving information regarding its value” (Brophy, 1981). Praise is used to recognize students based on the

teacher's perceptions of worth. This worth is in regards to the student's behavior and academic work. In addition, praise is subjective, as each teacher has a different idea of what is valuable and important to praise (Burnett & Mandel, 2010).

Tiers of Teaching Expertise

Berliner (1988) created a five-stage theory to explain how an individual progresses from a novice teacher to an expert. The sequence of stages described the developmental levels of teachers during their journey of acquiring pedagogical techniques. The theory also attributed distinctive features that described each level of expertise. *Novice* was at the far end of the spectrum while *expert* was consequently the highest tier of acquisition (1988).

Most prospective and first-year teachers fall into the novice category. This means that they are beginning to attain the proper pedagogical skills for educating. As novice teachers, these individuals learn the procedures and required skills to move up the developmental stages. These teachers gain experience, which is critical to teaching and their future progression up the developmental ladder (Berliner, 1988). As novices, these teachers have less depth of experience for reference in making their decisions, and so handle challenges differently than expert teachers. These two groups of teachers differ most in the amount of personal experience they have in teaching situations, and this difference produces the greatest divergences in their teaching strategies.

Differences among novice and veteran teachers

The reason for studies dealing with novice and expert teachers is to understand the nature of teaching expertise. Developments in expertise of teaching have been related to expertise in similar career fields. Like other professions, expert educators gain large amounts of knowledge overtime and possess abilities to cognitively interpret things in meaningful ways. They also possess the ability to make successful decisions that lead to high levels of performance and achievement. As noted in various pieces of literature on the topic, expert knowledge systems provide a process for distinguishing “relevant cues and attending to more salient information during planning and interactive decisions” (Tan et al., 1994, p.4; Marzano, 2003). This evidence supports the ideas that teachers may change their teaching styles, methods, and planning as they gain more experience. However, these studies have not dealt with how experience relates to teachers’ methods of praise in the classroom or if there was any shift in the usage of praise due to experience.

The majority of public school teachers spend endless hours in the classroom and subsequently have ways of preparing for certain situations they may encounter. As a result, they excel in the ability to create proper behavioral management plans (Burnett & Mandel, 2010). These expert teachers establish certain procedures, rules, strategies, and routines that all tie into the way they manage their classroom. This management knowledge allows them to properly solve problems with the best outcome and minimal amounts of error (Burnett & Mandel, 2010). Again, the literature has provided little or no

mention of how praise fits into teacher preparation. At times, praise can be found in behavioral management plans, but the evidence needed to determine if praise would be prepared or thought about before it was given simply is not extant.

Perhaps even more importantly, expert and novice teachers differ in the ways they assess learning difficulties among students when managing classroom behaviors (Marzano, 2003). This difference in turn leads to different expectations of achievement and effort, and hence the conditions for praise. Prospective teachers who have undergone behavior management training using praise considered the training a useful prerequisite for teaching (Marzano, 2003). Since the prevalence of this training might differ from novice to experts teachers, this study again gave cause to believe that there would be differences in the implementation of praise.

Although it seems that expertise affects teachers' use of praise, little research exists on the connections or correlations between expertise and use of praise; however, research on how praise is used in common settings provides some insight on the question (Chalk & Bizo, 2004). According to J. Brophy, "Constructive feedback is given in a context in which it is clear that the performance is valued and that most students would regard such feedback as implying approval. It is also an expression of positive teacher effect and gives information about the value of the students' behavior or its implications regarding the student status" (McVey, 2001, p.29).

Intrinsic motivation

When used in a manner that encourages positive behaviors and outcomes, praise is effective in activating students' intrinsic motivation and increasing teacher approval rates. Students also apply themselves more rigorously to their studies when rates of approval are high. According to Chalk and Bizo (2004), "specific praise could increase a learner's knowledge of the learning strategies and effort required for success, thus increasing self-regulated learning" (p. 337). Crespo (2001) discusses the way in which praise provides encouragement to students, helps build self-esteem, and helps build a close teacher-student relationship (Crespo, 2001). Not surprisingly, then, praise is defined as an integral portion of instruction in which there is an increase in task engagement in actual learning (Crespo, 2001). These findings may be reasons that novice and expert teachers do or do not praise, when they use praise, and how they do so. Conversely, there may be no specific reason teachers praise other than to encourage students.

Novice teachers are more likely to use self-reflection as a professional tool, and therefore, novice teachers are more likely to self-evaluate their use of praise. They also are more likely to self-evaluate and use their reflections upon their classroom successes or failures to improve and change their teaching styles (Leeshem, 2006). In terms of classroom management, "Novice teachers tend to respond in ways that are less directive and obtrusive than their experienced counterparts. New teachers appear to be patient, share responsibility, and interact with students" (Martin & Baldwin, 1994, p. 6).

Experienced teachers are not as likely to reflect on their teaching, as it becomes more of a routine for them throughout the years. They are more likely to react in an interventionist pattern (Tileston, 2004). In addition, experienced teachers are more likely to adapt their lessons to meet the needs of their students. Novice teachers are more likely to stick to lesson plans regardless of the needs of their students at the time (Leeshem, 2006). Praise specifically is not noted in these studies, but nonetheless, they collectively found that novice teachers are more likely to reflect on what was and was not working in all realms, including praise. Expert teachers, on the other hand, may lose awareness of their praising style overtime because many do not have the training that focuses on reflection. Finally, the risk of falling into a routine is high with experienced teachers and the effects of this on praise are still unknown. The more prevalent use of reflection by novice teachers relative to expert teachers, coupled with the tendency of expert teachers to form long-term routines, points to two provable reasons that these groups would cognitively process their use of praise differently.

Another difference between experienced and a novice educator is that experienced teachers often have attributed student achievement to biological features and so have believed student achievement was predetermined. Novice teachers believe that achievement ties in directly with the role that teachers play in student learning and the importance of student effort (Georgiou, 2008). These extremely different schools of thought can naturally impact the viability of praise. If a teacher believes students had a predetermined academic ability, they have little or no need to use praise as a motivational

and encouraging tool, and thus question the role of praise in their classrooms. In contrast, teachers who believe that student achievement additionally is tied to the teacher are more likely to use praise as a tool to improve performance or behavior in students.

Motivating Students and Behavior Management

In terms of classroom management, the praising of appropriate behavior and the ignoring of disruptive behavior are effective in the development of a desirable classroom atmosphere. On-task behavior increases when the teacher generates praise (Chalk, 2004). Multiple researchers agree that verbal praise is seen as a powerful tool in influencing the development of social behavior (Chalk, 2004 and Tileston, 2004). Teachers also might use praise as a motivational tool. More specifically, teachers are able to influence their students' motivation through the feedback they supply. This feedback is most apparent in the form of praise (Maclellan, 2005).

Much like behavioral management, praise also influences achievement in students. Research finds that lower achievers learn more successfully after receiving praise (Tileston, 2004). This verbal praise also is seen to improve achievement in all types of learners (2004). McVey promotes praise and discusses how it is only successful when applied with proper specificity and selectivity (McVey, 2001). If not used correctly, it can create a negative result (2001).

Possible Obstructions to Learning

Although praise has a positive connotation, it is a controversial issue in the educational world. Praise is often credited with increasing motivation in students

(McVey, 2001). However, Alfie Kohn describes how it, in fact, motivates kids to get praise (Kohn, 1999). Praise can easily turn into a manipulative tool that, “often turns out to be a matter of benefiting the giver rather than the recipient” (Kohn, 1999, p.1).

Research finds that instead of motivating students to do well, it adds pressure by making them feel as if they must live up to the compliment. As a result, praise continuously sets the stage for competition among peers. Competition is fostered particularly by praise given publicly, which could possibly affect peer relations (Kohn, 1999).

Kohn (1999) analyzes a variety of different elementary studies in which he observes that elementary students whose teachers use praise are less persistent than their peers. As a result, students who receive praise seem to feel like they accomplished their task and so are not motivated to move beyond it. As a result, Kohn suggests that instead of frequent praise, teachers should say what they saw and ask more questions (Kohn, 1999). In other words, teachers should convey orally what they observe and probe the student to do more, versus simply validating their actions.

Praise could be viewed as a questionable motivating tool because verbal praise is actually an evaluation. Of course, any type of judgment can often lead to a feeling of discomfort (Dweck, 2008). Consequently, the use of praise often is linked to learner helplessness, which can lead to student disinterest and craving of approval (Maclellan, 2005).

In considering Dweck and Maclellan’s suggestions, the attribution theory proves one of the most influential theories that deal directly with academic motivation. This

theory describes how people explain things. Part of the attribution theory is behavior modification, describing how positive outcomes motivate students to choose behavior patterns that let them feel good about themselves (Weiner, 1992). This theory also includes concepts concerning cognitive theory and self-efficacy, which explain how students' self-perceptions have a direct effect on how they interpret success or failure. This interpretation will have an effect on their current efforts as well as how they perform these same behaviors in the future (Dweck, 2008).

Attribution Theory

The attribution theory also in part describes how positive statements of praise often indirectly convey attribution information to students. Children aged two to seven tend to internalize comments by authority figures, and fail to analyze them carefully to figure out whether or not they make sense. For this reason, praise can work reasonably well as encouragement or general reinforcement for this age group. However, once they get a little bit older, children begin to expect praise only after certain behaviors and not others. At this point, students begin analyzing and evaluating the praise instead of just internalizing it (Dewar, 2008). These students attribute low ability to individuals who are praised after success but given natural feedback after failure, and high ability to individuals who receive natural feedback after success but criticism after failure (Barker, 1987). Often, praise is seen as objectionable when used as a deliberate strategy or a gimmick to get desired outcomes in student behavior (Kohn, 1999).

Intentional Feedback

Another concept addressed in this study is the difference in how praise might be used to reward student effort, even if it did not necessarily result in high levels of achievement, versus using praise to reward those with the highest levels of achievement (Moller, 2005). The many complicating factors in day-to-day classroom activities certainly can cause praise to backfire. This possibility is especially true in choosing to direct praise toward effort versus achievement.

Jens Möller warns of a counter-intuitive process whereby students attribute negative value to well-intentioned praise of effort. When students attribute praise as being directed to effort (rather than ability or achievement), they often interpret it as a statement of their lack of ability: “Praise can lead to an attribution of low ability if another student is not praised for an identical achievement. In contrast, criticism can lead to an attribution of high ability if another student is not criticized for an identical achievement” (Möller, 2005, p. 276). However, controlling students’ attributions of praise as evidence of ability rather than effort is notoriously difficult outside of experimental situations (Covington, 1992; Brophy, 2004).

Four Key Components of Praise

Praise is used as an intrinsic motivator when carefully and appropriately developed. When using praise to activate student perseverance, four key components must be present. The first component of praise and motivation is “attributes of performance” (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002). When students are offered praise for simple

tasks or they are praised only for their current ability, these students may often have a poor view on their own performance. However, if the teacher is more selective with praise, the student may perform better in future tasks.

The second component of praise is “student self-efficacy”. When students are praised for tasks largely controlled by the teacher, they may have less intrinsic motivation (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002). Conversely, students participating in assignments with little outside interference may have increased levels of intrinsic motivation and success. These students are able to develop an increased independence.

Third is the component of “task competence”, or understanding praise’s effects on students. When students are praised based on their ability in relation to others, they may have little intrinsic motivation. Praise that offers specific information on progression of ability encourages higher levels of self-efficacy and motivation (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002).

The last component, then, encompasses teacher expectations. Goals set forth by the teacher should encourage each student’s highest level of ability as the standard (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002). Expectations should be tailored to each individual student and their ability and competency.

Summary

After surveying many studies, Brophy (2004) synthesizes the behaviorist and self-determination schools of thought. His expression is prescient:

Even when praising significant achievements, it is better to focus on the effort and care that the student put into the work, on the gains in knowledge or skills that the achievement represents, or on the achievement's more noteworthy features than to portray the achievement as evident of the student's intelligence or aptitude (Brophy, p.167).

The useful distinction does not seem to be between effort and achievement, but more between the ways in which praising either of these with poor techniques can backfire.

Praising effort overall is good because it does not make earning a reward the goal of learning behavior, but if it is administered insincerely or excessively, it can undermine the teacher as an honest source for evaluation (Bartholomew, 2008). Achievement should not be neglected--this would perhaps contribute to the erosion of the teacher's credibility--but emphasizing product over process leads students to attribute value to participation and learning only when they result in a reward. This attribution shift can be deleterious to intrinsic motivation and student self-determination (Brophy, 2004).

Directing praise to increase both achievement and effort does not necessarily mean that teachers should praise more. Once again, Brophy sounds a cautionary note: "Correlations between teachers' rates of praise and their students' achievement gains are low in magnitude and mixed in direction, suggesting that the most effective teachers are sparing rather than effusive in their praise" (Brophy, 2004, p.167; Brophy and Good, 1986). However, if a teacher is too parsimonious with praise, she or he might create a

situation of competition, which makes belief in personal ability more fragile and prone to catastrophic failures (Bartholomew, 2008). The lesson to take from these competing possibilities is again that praise should be used for both effort and achievement so that it is not too predictable, too easily earned, or too selectively given.

Teachers seemingly tend to use more praise than punishment. This observation is appropriate because using consequences more than rewards may actually have increased the time spent with a problematic student, unintentionally rewarding that student with desired attention. Unlike praise, punishment teaches students only what not to do. Praise, on the other hand, encourages students to use skills to do what is expected of them, much like intrinsic motivation (Maclellan, 2005). Praise and positive reinforcement may actually improve a variety of positive changes in attitude, including self-esteem (Crespo, 2001).

Investigating the differences between praise and punishment would be of great utility in a future study. It is important to find out what works in the classroom. Investigating the differences between praise and punishment would increase the ability to distinguish appropriately between them when using them in an educational setting. These findings in turn would lead to implications for both novice and veteran teachers' use of praise to increase effort and achievement.

Conclusion

Education then must focus on enabling students to develop their self-esteem and social awareness. Teachers provide a wonderful outlet for teaching students how to

respect themselves and others while also working alongside team members. This respect can be achieved by using specific verbal feedback. When this directive feedback exists, a classroom and school are transformed into a safe environment where students and team members are free to share their ideas and are less likely to act out.

Clearly, a teacher should act as a guide and motivator for student learning. Rather than providing tools for rote memorization, the teacher should provide opportunities for all students to access valuable and meaningful information (Rodriguez, 2008). Thus, the student's curiosity directs individual learning techniques, and student's needs are met by finding answers to their questions. Students must be able to access information on their own so that they may construct their own knowledge. By having teachers as a guide and motivators through the use of praise, they are able to provide opportunities and activities that allow student self-discovery and the construction of knowledge. Teachers should make sure the learning environment provided to their students enables them to reach their full potential through direct instruction and the sharing of thoughts and ideas.

Not only should teachers provide opportunities for self-discovery, but also they should provide lessons relevant and meaningful to students' lives (Dewey, 1897). A curriculum built upon student interest provides for more student motivation in the classroom. Meaningful and relevant lessons are also desirable. Students are able to gain information by engaging in activities that involve all aspects of education including feedback (Cowan, 2008). Students, as a result of directive and positive feedback, grow in

their desire to learn. As a result, students work harder to reach their goals and enjoy the growth that takes place throughout the learning process.

Education not only enables the student to grow, but the teacher and team members as well. Teaching is an especially fertile field for providing continuing opportunities for growth. Through teaching, educators are able to share their passion for learning with young students and team members alike. They are also able to make positive changes in young students' lives that leave lasting impressions. Compassionate teachers establish wonderful student environments that are sensitive to personal needs and learning styles, besides offering numerous opportunities to receive direct verbal praise. Hand in hand with both pillar one and three of the three intellectual pillars in Owens' work, compassionate teachers also understand the behavior of their leaders and team members and so are able to work together to achieve a variety of goals (Owens & Valesky, 2007).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the attempt to understand the nature of praise in the classroom, this project was a carefully planned exploration examining the way teachers use praise in general education upper elementary classrooms. This qualitative study assumes the form of a phenomenological approach. Via this approach, a richer understanding of the use of praise in elementary classrooms from the teacher perspective can be achieved.

This qualitative project took place over the course of three months. Observations and data gathering tools were implemented in six sixth grade classrooms across one district. The district is located outside a larger city in a more suburban setting. Due to the nature of the location next to a military base, many students in the district are transient.

Research Design

The approach adopted for this study specifically is the hermeneutical phenomenological approach. The reason for a phenomenological approach was its ability to focus on how praise, as the phenomenon, is used in the upper elementary classroom. The phenomenological approach focused on the differences between novice and veteran teachers.

The theorist Husserl originally brought the phenomenological approach to light. He believed that experiences served as the foundation of consciousness. Husserl (1931) argued that by setting aside any preconceived ideas, one is able objectively to describe the examined phenomena. He hoped to gain an understanding of human experiences

(Husserl, 1931).

Many different methods are used in phenomenological studies. Often times, qualitative studies involve transcribing interviews, coding data, and coming to conclusions based on emerging themes (Husserl, 1931). As a researcher, it was imperative that this researcher chose a method that fit the developed research questions.

The man most responsible for defining hermeneutic phenomenology is that of Martin Heidegger. He developed hermeneutics as a way to interpret the phenomena present in a phenomenological study. Originally, hermeneutics was derived from the Greek term, "*hermeneuin*: to interpret" (Odman, 1998).

Today, it is known as a method of interpretation for research as well as a philosophy. When using hermeneutic phenomenology as the perspective the researcher must experience the world without judgment. The researcher must use all of the senses to put meaning to experiences (Walsh, 1996).

More specifically, hermeneutic methods allow for the examination of patterns. By examining these patterns, interpretations and meanings emerge through answers to questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). By using hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher is able to add meaning to participants' experiences through the researcher's own knowledge.

Hermeneutic phenomenology allows for the areas the participants may have difficulty in articulating to be transformed into explicate meanings and generalizations. The key elements of qualitative studies were summarized and included components that

allowed for the including of settings and participants that would better assist in understanding a phenomenon. The experiences and beliefs of the teacher participants will provide description, clarification, and reflection. All these things are necessary to understand the meaning of the experiences with using praise in the classroom (Creswell, 2007, 2009).

One researcher explained that the qualitative study does not simply summarize findings. Instead, the qualitative method is used to analyze, code, interpret, and construct (Richard, 2005). Finally, it is important to remember that technology is a wonderful tool to use when analyzing data, but it fails to compare to the human element that allows for interpretation and the generating of theories (Gibbs, 2007).

As a qualitative researcher, an organized manner for approaching was needed. Due to the phenomenological approach, the researcher had to develop a plan to ensure the appropriate participants were readily available to answer questions. The use of observations, interviews, or written descriptions, enabled obtaining the data needed. From there, information was coded and categorized. Lastly, it was hoped to have the findings agreed upon by others to ensure the integrity of my conclusions (Schutz, 1962).

Research Question #1: *How do novice and veteran teachers differ in their use of praise?*

Research Question #2: *What are the pros and cons of praise in the classroom?*

Research Question #3: *Why do teachers use praise in the classroom?*

Participants and Sampling

The participants for the study were selected based on the grade levels that they currently teach. This was an intentional use of criteria based sampling for the purpose of obtaining intermediate teachers for my study (Gibbs, 2007). Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 1990, p. 238). First, the superintendent of the participating school was contacted to gain permission to conduct research within the school system. Secondly, the principal of the selected school was approached to explain the study and to ask permission to contact teachers in order to secure volunteer participants. In turn, six participants were formally secured. Finally, consent forms were sent to each participant to explain the study and to set up dates for observations and interviews.

The participants included six sixth-grade teachers in all-inclusive public classrooms at one rural school. Other novice and veteran teachers at the school were interviewed. Prospective teachers (practicum students) studying elementary education in the Masters of Teaching program at Eastern Washington University also were observed during the project.

The participants ranged in age from 25-60. These participants needed to be sixth grade teachers, and there was no involvement of special populations. The maximum number of participants was ten. Six teachers were selected from the school. There was no need for any more participants than those teachers involved and local administration. The

reason for choosing these teachers was their willingness to participate and their location at the selected setting.

Data gathered from participants. The data for all six participants was collected through email correspondence. The data in Table 2 included pertinent information about each participant. Through email correspondence, each participant provided information on their educational and teaching background. This information was entered into the table below. Pseudonyms were used for each participant involved in the study.

Table 2

Participant Overview

Pseudonym	Content Area Taught	Current Grade Taught	Degree	Teaching Experience in Years
Albert	Math and Science	6 th	M.A.	10
Bonnie	Language Arts and Science	6 th	M.A.	11
Caroline	Language Arts and Social Studies	6 th	B.A.	2

Donna	Language Arts and Social Studies	6 th	M.A.	3
Evie	Math and Science	6 th	M.A.	20
Fran	Math and Science	6 th	M.A.	7

Setting/Site

The pseudonym for the school in the chosen district was Praise School. Praise School consists of over three hundred students. It is predominately White in ethnicity with nearly fifty percent of the population being military dependents. The site is located near a military base with class sizes ranging from eighteen to twenty-five.

Researcher’s Role/Personal Biography

As the researcher in this study, my background is both in fourth grade and sixth grade classrooms. My father, brother, and husband are all in the Air Force assuring familiarity with the lives of military dependents. To be more specific, my father was an F-16 pilot in charge of the Alaskan Command, and my husband and brother have recently returned from deployments. Before moving to the area with my husband, I finished a

master's degree in Virginia. My husband currently serves at the previously mentioned military base as a combat arms instructor.

On the professional side, I graduated from James Madison University's Masters Certification program with a degree in Elementary Education. I student taught for a full year in a fourth and first grade class in Virginia as well as fourth grade in Washington. This is my second year teaching, so I would be considered a novice teacher.

I have my own biases on the use of positive reinforcement, so I have chosen to exclude my views from the study. I strongly believe that Christ should be the center of all education, so my Christian background will play a large part in my implications for the research study.

Throughout this project my role was that of a privileged observer. By definition, a privileged observer does not assume the role of participant but has easy access to the related activity for the research study (Wolcott, 1988). As a teacher in a classroom setting, I had easy access to information. I conducted this project in classrooms of which I am a guest. Other teachers received a summary of the proposal (Appendix A) so that he/she knew my research intentions. Multiple methods were used to conduct the project and gather qualitative data. These multiple methods were justified through a process called triangulation. This triangulation process involved the thorough reviewing of data collected through different methods in my project (Pelto & Pelto, 1978). This methodological triangulation will be acquired through field notes, videotaping, and

interviewing. This process will make findings a more accurate and valid account of what will be observed through myriad data collection strategies (Mills, 2007).

I began preparing for the study by practicing methods of data collection and interpretation. Other pilot efforts included reviewing the interviewing process in class, specifically through formulating questions, practicing body language, and recording findings through writing and discussion. As the researcher, I used real-life scenarios to rehearse data analysis, taking into account the differences in responses and perspectives. After evaluating these experiences, I addressed the need for audio and video tape recordings as part of the data collection. I then determined how to obtain these tools and evaluated the need to transcribe the data after collection. Directly following, I brainstormed some possible options for interviewees, and decided if it were imperative to speak to all teachers. As a privileged observer I anticipated some specific questions that were utilized in different interview settings (Appendix B).

Data Collection

The proposal received approval from the Institutional Review Board in March of 2012. Once this approval was received, emails were sent to the superintendent of the desired district of study. From there, separate emails were directed to the possible school and participants to gain permission to collect data.

Once the participants gave permission, e-mail correspondence allowed for the setting up of interviews and classroom observations. Each interview and observation was scheduled at the participants' convenience.

A variety of tools were used to collect data throughout the study. The hopes were that the variety of tools would offer a more complete understanding of the use of praise in the elementary classroom as well as the differences between novice and veteran teachers.

The data collection was appropriate for this project as it focused exclusively on the teachers and not the students. Having taken the IRB survey and understanding IRB requirements and the requirements put upon me by the College of Education, I felt confident that I was not involving students in a conflicting situation.

The methods were interviewing, videotaping, observing, professional journals, and running records. The interviews allowed me to question the veteran and novice teachers about when they intentionally use praise, why they use praise, and what they think about the role of praise in the classroom. The interviews allowed for the perspective of how different teachers view the usefulness of praise. During the interviews a prepared set of questions were used as well as further questions as a result of answers to the set questions (Mills, 2007). Choosing these methods was determined by the nature of the study, praise, which can be best captured through actual events (Mills, 2007). This idiosyncratic approach to collecting data added to the comprehension and conclusions of the given qualitative study (Mills, 2007).

Interviews and Observations: Both the teachers and principal were interviewed in the beginning of the research study. Through a semi-structured interview, I asked a standard set of questions with some new questions that arose from the responses (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

The interviews allowed me to establish rapport with my participants. These interviews produce the highest response rates in qualitative research. They also clarified vague answers and indicated where appropriate, to seek follow-up information (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

Guiding questions for the first phase of the interview included but were not limited to:

- Please tell me about a time when praise made a difference for one of your students
- Do you think that teachers use praise effectively? (i.e. used too much, too little, not in the right way) What are your suggestions for using praise more effectively?
- How should praise be used to validate effort or ability? Explain.
- How do you think praise is used differently in different subjects? Do you think praise should be used differently in different subjects?
- There are many critics of praise who claim it can, in fact, decrease intrinsic motivation, how do you feel about that?
- How have the benefits or drawbacks of using praise been evident in your classroom?
- What is your philosophy concerning use of praise with students?
- How do you use praise differently with different students? Subject areas? Times of day?

- What kind of discipline system do you use? Do you think this affects your use of praise?
- What are your feelings about using positive reinforcement? Punishment?
- What kind of differences do you think are the biggest between veteran and novice teachers?
- How do you think these differences affect their use of praise?
- In which areas do you feel you use praise the most? (i.e. effort, achievement)
- In what ways do you think you used praise differently when you were a novice teacher?
- In what ways do you think you will use praise differently when you are a veteran teacher?

Another method used was observation. This method promoted the taking of notes on what was going on in the entire classroom, whereas videotapes only captured what was happening in the portion of the classroom at which it was directed (Wolcott, 1988). Observation allowed me to see when teachers used praise and if things going on in different areas of the room affected the teacher's praise.

Through observations, this researcher made notes of such things as normal classroom routines, typical amounts of praise, how and to whom it was given and kinds of praise. The different contexts of praise were also closely examined, whether it was being given during individual, group or whole class work time and in different subject areas (Kontos, 1999). Specific word choice, timing and student responses were important

factors to further investigate. Patterns and differences seen between the way novice teachers and veteran teachers gave praise were also investigated (Kontos, 1999).

Professional Journals and Running Records: Throughout the research study one subject was followed. The room was scanned to conduct running records--a running record being a narrative written over a certain amount of time. This narrative records behaviors as they occur. The purpose of the running record was to record the delivery of praise as it occurs. Through a running record, I was able to capture the most components of behaviors in as much detail as possible (Wolcott, 1988). Running records were used primarily for identifying the frequency and type of praise in veteran and novice teachers. Veteran and novice teachers were interviewed to gain insight on their thoughts and uses of praise.

Checklists were implemented to monitor the amount and type of praise that was witnessed in the classroom setting. Finally, field notes and completing a professional journal allowed for personal reflection on observations. Utilizing these tools allowed the collection and triangulation of qualitative data.

Professional journals allowed for journaling of what was seen, what was thought, and what information was needed. Running records proved a reliable source of data collection (Wolcott, 1988). Through this, the frequency of praise given was analyzed in the classroom, as well as the differences in amount of praise given by different participants. The contrasts between new and veteran teachers' use of praise was investigated specifically, and in different contexts and different subject areas. A running

record allowed the counting of how many times a teacher used phrases like “good job” or “great work.” Also observed was if a veteran teacher used a certain phrase or praise more than a novice teacher, or if there was certain form of praise that veteran or novice teachers always used.

Videotaping, Obtaining Work Samples, and Taking Memos: Observations were recorded allowing for the review of the interaction between teacher and student. Work samples were collected to assist in determining the type of feedback present when grading work.

Both the veteran teachers and novice teachers were videotaped. This visual capture allowed for the direct observation of praise in the elementary setting. It also provided an opportunity to analyze a lesson and determine how and why she or he used praise. Videotaping allowed the collection of data for all three sub-questions. Thus, there were tapes that were reviewed for collecting data on veteran and novice teachers and praise in different subjects.

As a result, memoranda and transcript of the video observations were provided. This led to the creation of a coding system (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Sense was made of the data through this coding specifically with numbers and colors corresponding to the research questions. This system was used to detect emerging themes.

Data Analysis

Open coding: Open coding is the part of the analysis concerned with identifying, naming, categorizing and describing phenomena found in the text (Strauss & Corbin,

1998). Throughout the open coding process, data was collected and divided into different sections and examined for similarities that caused themes to emerge. After the data was categorized, they were then reviewed to find commonalities that defined each category. I then determined the meaning of the data by asking questions, looking for similarities and differences, and making comparisons. It was through this process by which similar phenomena were grouped to form categories. As a result, I was able to describe the phenomena being examined (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Throughout the open-coding process a variety of distinctions in data collection were examined. The first distinction to make was coding data according to novice and veteran teachers. Data was coded according to the various types of praise. Two principle categories of desired praises were those given for achievement and those given for effort.

For the analyzing process, data was coded based on the sub-question to which it applied. Coding data on emergent themes or patterns recognized created charts to display findings in an organized fashion. The charts were especially helpful for comparing praise among teachers.

This process allowed the compilation of data according to similar findings. The process significantly reduced the time spent on organization. I was able to successfully maintain my process of coding data; therefore, I found the data much easier to work with when completing my narrative of the research.

Reviewing Data: Throughout the research process, data was constantly reviewed. Through coding and comparisons, data was distinguishable related to the different sub questions.

Throughout the course of the year I had many ideas and goals for completing my dissertation. I realized that organizing and analyzing data were essential to a successful final product. And so, ahead of time, set aside three separate weeks in which I reviewed and thoroughly analyzed my data. The goal of this data review was to make sure that my observations were on task and effective, and to tweak my study in any way that may be necessary. It was also a time to recognize what kind of additional data I may need. These weeks were set for thorough analysis, although I was reviewing my data weekly.

When reviewing data, I separated them in their relationship to the different sub-questions I was answering in my research project. I also reviewed data to ensure that my study was reliable and valid. Importantly, I reviewed to ensure that the participants were protected throughout the process. I periodically checked my use of data collection. I also made sure to continue to align my efforts in the research directly with the research questions.

Narrative Analysis: When analyzing data, a form of narrative analysis was used. The use of praise was the central focus when conducting the narrative analysis. Through the narrative analysis, video recordings and observations were studied to make sense of praise through stories and experiences (Dey, 1993). Focus was also on the use of praise between novice and veteran teachers.

Constant Comparison: The data analysis process was continued through a method of constant comparison. This analysis method is described as a process that "combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981, p. 58). Therefore, as a certain phenomena were discovered and investigated they were also compared in a variety of categories. These categories continued to be refined throughout the data collection, which aided me in organizing thoughts. In other words, "As events are constantly compared with previous events, new topological dimension, as well as new relationships, may be discovered".

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established through a variety of techniques. These techniques included member checks, an audit trail, and the production of memos. Trustworthiness was based on Guba's standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in order to establish a valid study (Guba, 1981). This trustworthiness was achieved through triangulation, audit, and thick description of the context. A few specific areas required obtaining permissions before conducting research. One of these was videotaping in the classroom. Teachers needed to agree to having a video camera in their classroom. This study also required permission slips to be obtained from the students' parents in order to use their graded work as part of data collection (Appendix C). Finally, participants (or their legal guardians) were provided written guarantees that the identity of all participants would remain confidential.

Member Checks: Frequent member checks were conducted. This process involved the periodic questioning of all members to ensure their safety and comfort during the research process. Member checks were important because they ensure that all participants maintain their willingness to participate (Patton, 1990). This checking, in turn, generated a valid and reliable study.

Audit Trail: An audit trail is a description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development findings. These are records that are kept regarding what was done in a project (Malterud, 2001). The audit trail is a recording of all interviews and compiling of data. The audit trail was important because it offered a hard copy of the data compiled throughout the research process. This way, if there were any questions, a document or file easily can be retrieved.

Memoing: Memos are, “the theorizing write-up of ideas about substantive codes and their theoretically coded relationships as they emerge during coding, collecting and analyzing data, and during memoing” (Glaser, 1998, p. 57). Memoing was the process of constantly making notes in the field while conducting a research study. This important process offered an ongoing form of research. One often may find that the most significant findings are those noted when simply observing versus conducting an interview or checklist.

Ethical Issues

Importantly, ethical considerations were taken into account for the research study. If the study resulted in any negative findings, these results could have possibly impacted

the study and kept the participants from remaining anonymous. When coding data, pseudonyms were provided for those involved.

Such a study as this research project always has the potential for participants to become fully aware of their participation in a research study. The knowledge of participation within a study could potentially skew the results. To avoid this unwanted result, discretion was used when conducting research. Participants were encouraged to offer honest answers and feedback to any questions asked of them. The parents of the students involved in the study were fully aware of the research procedures, while students were less familiar with the research being conducted.

The investigation of the pros and cons of each data-collection source continued throughout the study. For example, the importance of how a video recorder was positioned in the classroom was determined; planning thus required first obtaining such tools and then deciding upon whom the camera should be focused, the teacher or the students. Also factored into consideration were the possible disruptions a video camera could create in the classroom. Of course, teachers could be distracted or act differently when they are aware they are on tape. To stay organized, thorough action plans provided for the analysis of different biases and perspectives and even the investigation of my role as an observer in the classroom. Observations thus were made objectively and non-judgmentally by addressing any ethical issues that arose.

Finally, praise is a personal topic for me. I recognized my desire for praise, which first stimulated my interest in the topic. While this aspect is intrinsic to me, I also

realized this may not apply to all students, and I have to keep that bias in mind.

Additionally, as a novice teacher, I am by avocation curious about how teachers employ praise or if they are even aware of it. I am quick to think that teachers use praise carelessly, without thinking through the effects. It was important that I did not allow this judgment to influence my data collection or force my data to match my bias.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter takes an in-depth view of the many results and findings of the study. To refer to the original intent for the study, the purpose was to examine how teachers used praise in general education elementary classrooms and by analysis of these usages gain a deeper, richer understanding of the use of praise in elementary classrooms from the teacher perspective. This chapter focuses on the participants, interviews, observations, and the work samples collected through the duration of the study. Throughout the duration of the study, many useful themes emerged as praise was observed in the classroom. This chapter relates these themes and their ability to answer the original research questions posed in chapter one.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers used praise in general education elementary classrooms and by analysis of these usages to gain a deeper, richer understanding of the use of praise in elementary classrooms from the teacher perspective.

The primary focus was to describe as precisely as possible the phenomenon of praise, abstaining from any pre-given framework, and instead remaining true to the specifics (Groenewald, 2004). First, teachers' use of praise was investigated over the course of three months. Observations and data-gathering tools such as videotaping and interviews were implemented in six sixth grade classrooms across one district. Secondly,

this study was conducted in attempts to gain a deeper, richer understanding of the use of praise in elementary classrooms from the teacher perspective.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do novice and veteran teachers differ in their use of praise?
2. What are the pros and cons of praise in the classroom?
3. Why do teachers use praise in the classroom?

Participants

The participants for the study were selected based on the grade levels they currently teach. First, the superintendent of the participating school was contacted to gain permission to conduct research within the school system. Secondly, the principal of the selected school was contacted to explain the study and to ask permission to contact teachers in order to secure volunteer participants. In turn, six participants were formally secured. Finally, consent forms were sent to each participant to explain the study and to set up dates for observations and interviews.

Participant summary. The participants involved in the study were all sixth grade teachers who co-teach content areas in a two-person team. For example, if one teacher teaches math and science, then the opposite team member teaches language arts and social studies. All teachers have at least one year of teaching experience. They all gained teacher certification through accredited teacher preparation programs and are all considered highly qualified in the state of Washington.

Individual participant descriptions. Albert is a sixth-grade math and science teacher. He has been teaching for ten years and has taught in sixth grade for the past seven. He has a master's degree education. He also has administration credentials and recently received a principal position for the following school year.

Bonnie is a sixth-grade language arts and social studies teacher. She and Albert are team members. She has a master's degree in education and has taught for eleven years. All but two of her teaching years have been in the sixth grade.

Caroline is a sixth-grade language arts and social studies teacher. She is a part-time teacher and shares her position with another individual. She has a bachelor's degree in reading and has only been teaching for two years. She has taught in sixth grade each time.

Donna is a sixth-grade language arts and social studies teacher. She is a part time teacher and shares her position with Caroline. She has a master's degree in elementary education and special education and has been teaching for only three years. She previously taught preschool before moving to sixth grade. Donna recently took time off of teaching for the birth of her second child.

Evie is a sixth-grade math and science teacher. She has a master's degree in elementary education and has been teaching for over twenty years. She is the other half of Caroline and Donna's team. She has taught third and sixth grade in her twenty of years of teaching.

Fran is a sixth-grade math and science teacher. She has a bachelor's degree in business and a master degree in education. She has taught for seven years. Before teaching sixth grade, she owned her own local business.

Interviews

The following excerpts of the interviews were recorded in audio to allow for easy transcription (Appendix F). The interviews were transcribed and coded according to emerging themes. None of the answers were changed in any way. Due to the unaltered nature of the responses, some seem very similar and at times repetitive. Most participants stayed on topic and did not stray from the original interview questions.

The interviews are important because they provided a snapshot of how each participant felt specifically relating to the use of praise in their own and others' classrooms. The interviews were coded for similar emerging themes, and three tables (Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5) were created to offer a more simplistic snapshot into each participant's standpoints as they relate to the research questions.

Interview Findings

In order to precisely address the three research questions at hand, each interview was categorized and then displayed in three different tables (Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5). These tables provide a direct insight into the way each teacher responded to the three research questions posed in the study. Table 3 addresses research question number one which asked: How do novice and veteran teachers differ in their use of praise? Table 4 addresses research question number two: What are the pros and cons of praise in the

classroom? Finally, Table 5 addresses the third and final research question: Why do teachers use praise in the classroom?

Table 3 also considers some sub questions that arose through the interview process. Using the table, one is able to see if the teachers use praise differently for different students, where they use praise the most, and if they feel novice and veteran teachers differ from one another.

Table 4 displays whether or not the participants believe that teachers use praise effectively and if they think praise decreases intrinsic motivation.

Table 5 addresses whether or not teachers praise for effort, achievement, or both, and then displays the participants who believe praise should be used differently in different subjects.

Table 3

Interview Findings

Research Question #1

Participant	Do you use praise differently for different students?	Where do you use praise the most?	Do veteran and novice teachers use praise differently?
Teacher Albert	No	Effort	Yes
Teacher Bonnie	No	Effort	Yes
Teacher Caroline	Yes	Achievement	Yes
Teacher Donna	Yes	Achievement	Yes

Teacher Evie	Yes	Effort	Yes
Teacher Fran	No	Achievement	Yes

Table 4

Interview Findings

Research Question #2

Participant	Do Teachers Use Praise Effectively	Do you think praise decreases intrinsic motivation?
Teacher Albert	Yes	No
Teacher Bonnie	Yes	No
Teacher Caroline	No	Yes
Teacher Donna	Yes	No
Teacher Evie	Yes	No
Teacher Fran	Yes	No

Table 5

Interview Findings

Research Question #3

Participant	Effort, Achievement, or Both	Should praise be used differently in different subjects?
Teacher Albert	Both	Yes
Teacher Bonnie	Effort	Yes
Teacher Caroline	Both	Yes
Teacher Donna	Both	Yes
Teacher Evie	Both	Yes
Teacher Fran	Both	Yes

The interviews provided much insight that correlate directly with the emerging themes presented later in this chapter. In particular many teachers had strong views on both the difference among novice and veteran teachers as well as having different standards for different students.

In relation to novice and veteran teachers, all of the participants offered various points of view. In Albert’s interview, he described the difference in awareness, “I think veteran teachers are more aware of how they are using praise and the possible outcomes that may occur. Novice teachers tend to focus more on using praise to help with their classroom management” (Albert Interview, 2012).

Along the same lines both Bonnie and Caroline noted the difference in balance that occurs among novice and veteran teachers, “I think veteran teachers don’t give out as much praise. They have learned what works and what doesn’t. As a novice teacher, I use praise all of the time to help control my classroom” (Caroline Interview, 2012). Bonnie even went on to explain her hopes in finding a better balance with her feedback to her students. “My hope is that I will learn the magic formula between praise and constructive criticism, particularly in the teaching of writing. I would hope that I can identify students who need help with self-esteem and meet all learners where they are. I guess I would like to be effective at “differentiating” my praise” (Bonnie, Interview 2012).

Donna provided a different perspective when she described the differences among novice and veteran teachers as an ability to specify. “Veteran teachers don’t use as much because they are more specific with their feedback. I know the one teacher writes things on papers more than she articulates them. Perhaps she praises in her feedback on students’ work” (Donna Interview, 2012). Evie confirmed Donna’s thought by adding that veteran teachers are more purposeful in both their instruction and use of positive reinforcement by stating, “Veteran teachers have a more firm idea of what they incorporate in their classroom. They are very purposeful in all that they do. Veterans have more practical day-to-day experience, have tried more tricks, and have the experiences of other teacher to draw on when they need new ideas” (Evie Interview, 2012).

Finally Fran noted the differences among novice and veteran teachers as a difference in form of positive reinforcement. She suggested that novice teachers use more

tangible items whereas veteran teachers are more apt to stray away from tangible rewards and craft their feedback through language. “Newer teachers are more apt to use more tangible items whereas veteran teachers have learned the language” (Fran Interview, 2012).

When interviewed, all participants were asked their views on praising differently for various subject areas and students. Each participant offered their perspectives and their own instructional strategies in relation to praise. Specifically, Albert discussed the ways in which he uses praise differently for each student in his classroom, “I probably am more inclined to praise students who are struggling academically or who have difficult home lives” (Albert Interview, 2012).

Bonnie offered in an insightful story when she remembered a particular student she taught years before:

I had a student who came from a large family where there were several toddlers and babies at home. The student complained that she rarely had quiet time to read at home. Praising her for her efforts toward silent reading helped the student. She was able to find time at her grandparents’ home and school where she could focus on her reading. This student had become behind in reading because of the lack of homework support at home. Praising her helped her not give up and not become further behind (Bonnie Interview, 2012).

Caroline and Donna both agreed that they use praise more for the students in their classrooms that are struggling with different content and material. Caroline even went on

to add that she sometimes feels guilt for focusing on this particular population of students so strongly. “In terms of students, I use praise a lot more with my students that have behavior problems. I feel bad for praising them more but I am so focused on their behaviors throughout the day” (Caroline Interview, 2012). Donna was less apologetic when she added, “I find myself using praise more with my students who are struggling. They are the ones that need more encouragement along the way. My gifted students are more independent and don’t require as much encouragement” (Donna Interview, 2012).

Evie offered less insight into her use of praising her variety of students and instead chose to focus on how she praises differently in various subject areas. On the other hand, Fran suggested that praise be used the same for all students as they all have the same needs in terms of positive reinforcement. “A child who struggles academically, and one for whom learning comes more easily, both need praise because both need their self-esteem boosted” (Fran Interview, 2012).

Classroom Observations

Observations were conducted in the classrooms in order to allow the examination of the way in which each specific participant used praise. During observations, additional data was gathered (See Appendix G) in order to compare what was stated in interviews as opposed to what was witnessed in the classroom. During the observations, the followings behaviors were observed and recorded:

1. Presence of praise in the classroom
2. Examples of verbal praise

3. Examples of tangible praise
4. Praise used for effort versus achievement
5. Praise used for achievement versus effort

Various categories then emerged as observations were conducted in the classrooms. The observations gave various insights into a variety of data. As a result, the data was coded in order to identify concrete themes that are addressed later in the chapter. These themes allowed the data to be organized in a more efficient and manageable manner for readers and researchers.

Work Samples

Over one hundred documents from the classroom observations were examined as a way to identify types of praise used as feedback from the teacher. The documents collected were student work samples that had been graded. These documents were coded (Appendix H) and sorted by the type of feedback offered on the student work sample. Specifically, they were coded into four different categories. The first included student work samples with feedback that praised effort. The second group contained student work samples with feedback that praised for achievement. The third group contained either pictures or stickers. The fourth group contained only a grade mark.

As the documents were coded and organized, themes began to emerge that provided various answers and insight to the original research questions. The documents also led to many other ideas for future studies.

Themes

Throughout the duration of the study, many useful themes emerged as praise was observed in the classroom. Such themes included repetition of correct answers versus terms of direct praise, different standards for different students, and praise usage by veteran and novice teachers. Although some of these themes were not anticipated, they were found to be useful in relation to the study on praise in the elementary classroom and the research questions presented in this study.

Research Question One

Novice versus veteran teachers. This theme directly related to the first research questions dealing with how novice and veteran teachers differ in their use of praise. In general, the praise patterns of novice teachers greatly resembled those of the veteran teachers observed. Within a thirty minute time period of children asking targeted questions, veteran teachers averaged thirty-eight responses that were coded as praise while novice teachers averaged forty-one. Despite the overall similarity, there were some mild divergences in practice and theory.

Several patterns of praise emerged among the observed veteran teachers. Veteran teachers tended to repeat a correct answer and would give additional praise as a way of verbally rewarding students. All veteran teachers repeated an answer at least once; this repetition comprised about half of the praise they gave. Also, when veteran teachers gave praise, it also often was contingent on their assessment of the student's potential. One

teacher awarded a student “star student” status for a variety of criteria, such as “showing improvement”, “working to his or her potential”, and “shows academic progress.”

Veteran teachers tended to have higher expectations of their students than the novice teachers did. The level of enthusiasm novice teachers exhibited, veteran teachers reserved more selectively for higher level achievements. In one classroom, students were only allowed to select a treat if they received a grade of one hundred percent. Novice teachers were more likely to recognize students for high grades even if the grades were short of being perfect.

Veteran teachers also made sure to give praise specific to individual students’ capacities, and so they praised students for working up to their potential. A student with autism in one class, who initially refused to complete an assignment, was greatly rewarded when she did complete it. The teacher used a singing card to play “celebrate good times, come on!” as an expression of how impressed she was with the student’s work. Another teacher said, “I probably am more inclined to praise students who are struggling academically or who have difficult home lives.”

Other differences between novice and veteran teachers were noted throughout the study. Veteran teachers tended to use a few stock phrases like “good job,” whereas the novice teachers used a greater range of expressions like “excellent, great, and awesome.” One veteran teacher self-reported that she used praise more frequently now than when they first started teaching. One teacher described, “Classroom management was not a

strength of my undergraduate program. I have probably used praise more often as an experienced teacher.”

Because veteran teachers tied their use of praise to individual potential, they were very impressed when students showed significant improvement. Relative to the novice teachers observed in this inquiry, the veteran teachers spent much more time with the students. This difference in time involvement might account for the veteran teachers’ greater response to improvement. For example, one student of a veteran teacher received three yellow tickets (tokens of praise) when he correctly answered a question in an area he previously had struggled.

The difference between the novice and veteran teachers’ relations to the student also explained why veteran teachers more frequently referred to grades as part of motivation. For example, one veteran teacher told to the class that anyone who got a “C” or better had done a good job. Veteran teachers calculated and were familiar with the grades of all the students, whereas the novice teachers had only tangential involvement with grading. The novice teachers graded some assignments, but did so according to a rubric established and shared by the veteran teacher.

Each veteran teacher involved saw the purpose of giving praise to be to raise student self-esteem and create a safe learning environment. One teacher stated, “Praise is extremely necessary in building a child’s self-esteem. They must know that they have worth or value.” Another proclaimed, “This positive communication instills good feelings within students which fosters a warm, caring learning environment that they can

succeed in education/life.” These teachers saw praise as part of a two-pronged reward-punishment system, both of which were tools for creating a good learning environment. According to the veteran teachers, novice teachers were not as effective in delivering punishment or discipline because they wanted “to be liked” by the students. In interviews, novice teachers discussed their fears about being able to create boundaries between the positions of a friend and a mentor. Veteran teachers preferred to be respected more than liked. One veteran teacher added, “Novice teachers tend to praise more and want to please their students/others in the school. Veterans find a balance between the two: earning respect of their students and minimizing the punishment and balancing out the praise.”

Novice teachers’ reasons for giving praise tended to identify themselves with the students. Since the novice teachers desired praise from their veteran teacher counterparts, they believed their students would similarly value praise. The novice teachers often mimicked the veteran teachers’ exact management tools. On one occasion, a novice teacher was observed using the same original phrases as the neighboring veteran teacher. A typical statement of a veteran teacher was that “The more experience you have, the better you will get at discipline as well as praise.” Veteran teachers were leery of giving too much praise or of giving praise in the wrong way.

Veterans attributed their different strategies to their greater experience. One veteran of twenty-two years stated, “Veterans have more practical day to day experience, have tried more tricks and have the experiences of other teacher to draw on when they

need new ideas.” They also thought that the novice teachers would model or mimic the praise patterns of the veteran teachers they were observing and with whom they were working. In one interview, a novice teacher explicitly stated that, “I like to observe my veteran teacher counterpart and see what works for her since I don’t have as much experience as her. I then use that to my advantage and base my own management plan on the same ideals.” The main skill sets that veteran teachers saw novice teachers bringing to their classrooms were their unique experiences and their greater familiarity with new technology.

As a result of the many findings of this study, the research questions were answered through interviews, work samples, and observations. The many strategies for collecting data offered various insights into how teachers use praise in the upper elementary classroom and allowed for a synthesizing of thoughts. The findings also enabled the researcher to develop ideas for further research which are discussed in the following chapter.

Research Question Two

Different standards for different students. Another theme that became present during the study was the use of different standards for different students. This theme directly is related to the second research question on the pros and cons of praise in the classroom, being present in many different educational settings. As noted in video recordings, students with learning disabilities often were praised more for effort than product. In small group settings, it was obvious that certain students were asked lower-

level questions, which if responded to correctly brought classroom rewards. In multiple small group observations, struggling students received twice as many tangible rewards as their grade level peers.

In one particular observation, a student with special needs was refusing to complete her work. After much encouragement, the student eventually began her work. The teacher responded by singing a song and dancing with the student.

In interviews conducted with both novice and veteran teachers, different praising for different students was present, as well. Both types of teachers acknowledged that they do, in fact, have different standards for different students. One teacher said in an interview, "With my more academic students I tend to praise their grades etc. With my lower students, I tend to find their strengths, such as drawing, and praise on that behavior."

They also noted the reason they tailor praise to students is some students respond better to different things. The interviews stated that the teachers felt students who are struggling need more praise in terms of motivation. Alternatively, students on grade level or above need praise in the form of validation, which can include repeating the correct answer.

As praise was observed in various classrooms, it noticeably was varied depending on the context, meaning whole class instruction or small group and one-on-one situations. In situations where teachers worked one-on-one with students, praise was more exaggerated. For example, one teacher sang and danced the song "Celebration"

with a student when she completed an assignment. The teacher also exclaimed, "Yay! You did it! You go girl!" In another situation, a teacher working one-on-one with a student (who struggled with staying on task on a math assignment), praised the student after she completed each problem with assistance with expressions like "good job" or a "nice work." After the student completed a problem individually, the teacher said, "I'm so proud of you!" For each of the math problems the student completed independently after that, the teacher and student gave each other a thumb up and bumped their knuckles. This continued for each problem the student did on her own without verbal praise from the teacher.

Research Question Three

Repetition of the correct answer. The other themes that arose during the study were consistent in both novice and veteran teachers. Through multiple observation tools, repetition was found to be present in all classroom settings. Repetition was primarily used with students who appeared to be on grade level or above. In relation to this, struggling students who were not offered praise in the form of repetition instead often were given rewards for correct answers.

In relation to repetition, in many observations both novice and veteran teachers repeated students' correct answers versus offering words of praise. Similarly, when a student answered a posed question correctly, the observed teacher responded by repeating the correct answer back to the student. For example, during whole group instruction, one teacher read a workbook question to the class. A student responded with a correct answer

of “habitat”, and the teacher repeated habitat as she wrote it on the board. This occurred twelve more times during this lesson. She predominantly used this method of repeating the students’ correct answers rather than giving any other verbal praise. Repetition as observed thus became a form of praise in all observed classrooms. In an average of all observations combined, veteran teachers used repetition in a four-to-one ratio with other terms of praise. Novice teachers used repetition in a two to one ratio with other terms of praise. In one specific observation, a veteran teacher repeated correct answers four times in the duration of two minutes.

In accordance with actual observations, both novice and veteran teachers noted in interview questions that praise must be used carefully, as it may lose its meaning over time:

If praise is used too often, the same way all the time it can decrease intrinsic motivation. When a teacher observes that the type of praise he or she is giving to the students is not creating a positive result; then the teacher needs to make changes. Most students will turn a deaf ear to the same praise, in the same way, for the same things. They know when a teacher is being truthful or is just making something up for the time being. Students will not become motivated if the praise is not rewarded in a variety of ways (Participant Interview, 2012).

They noted that repeating of correct answers served to confirm correct answers without overusing praise in their educational setting.

In interviews, both types of teachers also went into as to how repetition helps learners retain concrete concepts in their long-term memory, assuming that the more often the concrete concept is retrieved and used, the more deeply it will be processed. The teachers emphasized that repeating a correct answer to a student after they say it causes it to stick longer. It also serves as a form of praise in terms of validation of a correct answer. Some teachers also noted that in whole group settings, repetition of correct answers allowed the full class to confirm they were on the right track. In other words, this repetition served as an indirect way to praise the whole classroom.

Context in which praise was given. Also observed was the way teachers in a one-on-one or small group setting praised more frequently than when they were directly instructing the entire class. In one classroom, five minutes of one-on-one work between student and teacher elicited twenty-four occurrences of praise. In the fifteen minutes of direct instruction prior to this, only sixteen occurrences of verbal praise were observed. Observations of more exaggerated praise in small group settings appeared consistently in all of the observed classrooms.

In the environment of whole-group instruction, praise varied from classroom to classroom. Repeating the correct answer as a form of praise was observed across all observed classrooms. One teacher predominately repeated the correct answer and gave little, if any, other types of praise during a given lesson. This teacher was also the only one not having any classroom management system based on positive reinforcement. However, in the interview, this teacher stated, “the more positives you can give the more

willing and receptive the students are to put forth more effort into their learning.” The other observed teachers more frequently offered praise, other than repeating the child’s answer, in a whole group setting. One teacher consistently repeated a student’s answer as praise and subsequently would give additional praise. This teacher used at least eight different phrases of praise, including “good job”, “yes”, “awesome job”, “thanks”, “that’s good”, “great job”, and “good”. The other observed teachers used praise in a similar way. In each whole-group observation they repeated the correct answer and also gave other praise, like “right”, “very good”, and “good job”. The same teachers also positively reinforced students through tickets and classroom money. These items were given out throughout the day as praise in tandem with verbal praise. Or other times, a ticket or classroom dollars would be given without verbal praise for effort or task completion.

Effort versus achievement. In this study, teachers apparently think it is important to praise for both effort and achievement. During the interviews, all of the teachers made a point of saying that effort needed to be praised as well as achievement. As one teacher put it, “I use praise for both effort and achievement. I think that trying to get the answer is just as good as getting it.” Another teacher suggested that, “A child who struggles academically and one for whom learning comes more easily both need praise because both need their self-esteem boosted.” A third teacher agreed that praise is needed for both effort and achievement. In addition, the same teacher offered, “Praise should be used to validate effort and ability because it will help students to continue to reach their goals and strive to do their best.”

Although teachers indicate they need to praise for both effort and achievement, less evident was giving praise for achievement. In one occurrence, praise for achievement was given during whole-class activities. In this class students got a treat from the treat jar whenever they got a 100% on a math test, which the teacher mentioned continuing throughout the year. Besides this example, praise for achievement was given by repeating the students' correct answers.

The importance of students' effort was obvious in all of the classrooms. In one, if a student's grade was between a C+ and B-, but they had put forth the effort to complete all their homework and participate in class, their grade would be bumped up to a B. This teacher claimed, "Effort goes a long way in here." Appreciation of effort also was evident when another teacher had just finished grading quizzes and told the class, "Anyone who got a C or better did a very good job. I am proud of you because I can tell you put effort into it." This same teacher had a few assignments where the students needed to draw and color. During each of the assignments, this teacher told the students they would not be graded on their artistic ability, but rather the teacher would see how much effort they put into it and would grade them on that component of work.

Students who struggled with a topic and had to put more effort into it often earned more praise than other students. In one class, students who struggled during a small group session would be given tickets for getting the correct answer, while students who did not struggle were given points, which were not worth as much as a ticket. Another teacher gave exaggerated praise for students who were having difficulties with

something. This teacher danced, sang, and uses phrases such as “you go, girl” and “awesome” when one of the students who was struggling to finish an assignment finally completed it. Also, in two of the classrooms, when a student was really struggling with something and had to work extra hard to complete an assignment, the teacher opened a card that sang celebration.

Also notable was the way praise was used with students who put effort into answering a question but did not get the correct answer. In one classroom, the teacher would often say “nice try,” or “no, but good try.” In another class the teacher gave out tickets for good guesses. She also told her students’ “nice try,” and “good guess.”

Summary of Findings

Research question number one dealt directly with the differences among novice and veteran teachers. More specifically, this question related to how novice and veteran teachers differ in their use of praise. In general, the praise patterns of novice pre-service teachers greatly resembled those of the veteran teachers observed. Despite the overall similarity, there were some mild divergences in practice and theory.

Research question number two dealt with the pros and cons of praise in the classroom. Through this research question, the theme that became present during the study was the use of different standards for different students. As noted in video recordings, students with learning disabilities often were praised more for effort than product. In small group settings, it was obvious that certain students were asked lower-level questions, which if responded to correctly brought classroom rewards. In multiple

small group observations, struggling students received twice as many tangible rewards as their grade level peers.

The other themes that arose during the study were consistent in both novice and veteran teachers and related directly to research question number three that asked why teachers use praise in the classroom. Through multiple observation tools, repetition was found to be present in all classroom settings. Repetition was primarily used with students who appeared to be on grade level or above. In relation to this, struggling students who were not offered praise in the form of repetition instead often were given rewards for correct answers.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this final chapter is to provide answers to the original research questions posed at the beginning of the study. The following summary provides a quick overview of the findings. Then, the discussion takes an in-depth look into the findings to articulate their implications in light of relevant literature. The third portion of the chapter provides an outline of the study's limitations and offers recommendations for future research. Finally, the conclusion of the chapter summarizes the salient parts of the study and its findings.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers used praise in general education elementary classrooms, and by analyzing these usages, gain a deeper, richer understanding of the use of praise in elementary classrooms from the teacher's perspective. The reasons for this study were primarily practical: the aim was to gain new perspectives on and knowledge of praise in the elementary classroom. In terms of practicality, elementary students are involved in direct instruction time for upwards of thirty hours a week, so teacher behavior may have a strong positive or negative effect on a student's learning environment (Marcotte & Hansen, 2010). These interactions among students and teachers make up the basis of teaching and learning.

As a result of the aims of this study, the following research questions were posed to guide the findings:

1. How do novice and veteran teachers differ in their use of praise?

2. What are the pros and cons of praise in the classroom?
3. Why do teachers use praise in the classroom?

The variety of tools used for data collection offered a clear set of findings that when compiled answered the initial research questions. The findings suggest that novice and veteran teachers do use praise differently; novice teachers are more inclined to offer random praise while veteran teachers tend to provide more specific and directed feedback.

The findings also reaffirmed many pros and cons of praise offered in the literature while offering new insights to other pros of praise. The pros of using praise included its serving as an intrinsic motivating tool. The main con of praise was that many students end up depending on praise. Thus, when praise was not directed toward a specific behavior, students may be left with little to no motivation.

Finally, teachers use praise for primarily two reasons: to provide feedback for effort and for achievement. This use was the most obvious way a teacher could communicate their expectations or excitement to their students. As a result, teachers felt that students were left with a sense of accomplishment and so would be enabled to continue intrinsically motivating themselves during future tasks.

Discussion of the Findings

Novice and Veteran Teachers. As the study progressed overtime, a fine line in the definition of praise emerged. The thought that led to this fine line was the reconsideration of what might legitimately be construed as feedback versus praise. As

noted in the study, both categories of teachers often repeated correct answers. This repetition was not necessarily an explicit statement of praise, but rather statements or gestures.

The findings of this study support the conclusion that novice and veteran teachers both use praise to reinforce behavior with their students. These prompts helped remind students about expectations for their learning and behavior in the classroom. For many students, verbal praise and tangible rewards proved helpful in instructing students how to manage their own behavior. As stated in the literature review, critically important is that all students intrinsically motivate themselves (MacLellan, 2005). All students have varying individual needs, and so teachers must evaluate whether praise and reward systems are appropriate for their classrooms. Responses from interviews showed a varied response from teachers' interpretations as to what type of praise was most important to the students. Teachers voiced how some students preferred verbal and some preferred rewards. Remarkably, they also voiced that they believed some students would say that praise was not necessary in the classroom. Regardless, all of the teachers' interviews confirmed praise vital to a healthy and positive classroom environment.

Praise in the classroom did differ in certain areas such as context and exact usage. Novice and veteran teachers were similar in the ways in which praise was present in their educational environments. Both groups of teachers tended to offer more praise in small group or individual settings. The differences in context and usage were based on the ability to focus on personalized attention given in different settings from the findings in

the study's literature review (Tan et al, 1994). Small groups create a more intimate learning environment and, therefore, required direct validation for the student. In a large group setting, teachers were more concerned with the entire class being provided with the correct information rather than offering a lot of praise to particular students who offer correct answers.

Praise in the classroom did not differ very much in the data analyzed between novice and veteran teachers. Veteran teachers tended to supply students with slightly less praise and different forms of praise. Many teachers used repetition of the correct answer as a form of praise, which also served as validation of the answer. The tone used when offering this validation was encouraging and positive. Novice and veteran teachers may have varying motives in their giving of praise as they have very different roles in the classroom. Veteran teachers have had many years to develop their teaching philosophy and tend to have more pressure and higher expectations on them than novice teachers do (Berliner, 1988).

It is under the assumption that many novice teachers actually mimic veteran teachers in their instruction and behavior management tools. Mimicking was ever so present when observing the novice and veteran classroom teachers one after the other. The novice teachers' use of instruction and behavior management was similar to that of their neighboring veteran teachers. This finding is not surprising because as mentioned in the literature review, according to Leinhardt & Greeno (1986), expert teachers have had the time and experience to develop the best fitting management plans for their specific

classroom. Alternatively, novice teachers lack the experience of a veteran teacher and therefore mimic what they see, as they have not had the experience and time to develop their own philosophies. So, this study highly recommends that novice teachers carefully reflect upon and pay attention to their praise and management system. In this way they can develop the best fit for their classrooms and are less likely to fall into a routine they have observed. Further are needed to isolate exactly why novice teachers mimic veteran teachers. Could it be their lack of experience causes them to use veteran teachers' techniques as a guide for instruction? Only further research can say.

Both novice and veteran teachers also used a variety of classroom management tools to help students learn how to control their behavior. The most effective tool was the use of verbal reinforcement in the form of praise. Praise is acknowledged as that which is used when a student follows certain directions or exhibits a desired behavior. Both novice and veteran teachers used positive reinforcement to look for behaviors to praise beforehand, in hopes of not getting off task (Brophy, 2004).

The Pros and Cons of Praise. It is important for teachers to build on social relationships, and through the use of praise, they are able to build positive relationships (Brophy, 2004). And so, teachers should get to know what type of praise their students respond to and what kind they prefer. This knowledge would be useful for successfully motivating students to learn through praise. Importantly, novices also need to take into account what does not work so that they and students benefit only from the correct constructive use of praise.

Crespo (2001) also noted how praise could be a powerful tool in establishing teacher student relationships. Teachers tend to use different forms of praise for different students to help build their relationship, which is inevitably different with each student.

Specific and systematic praise assists students in displaying behaviors most appropriate to their learning, as well as their classmates. Teachers carefully must plan how to manage classrooms. Classrooms managed well have few disciplinary issues and aid in creating a productive learning environment. Ferguson (1992) discussed how praise could be used as a management tool in the classroom setting. As observed in his study, when a teacher was forced to spend time dealing with a problematic student, less time was available for interaction with other students. Thus, specific praise and rewards are great tools in not only fostering and promoting effective behaviors, but also in conserving critically important class time for the task at hand.

Brophy (1986) stresses the importance of praising for effort rather than achievement as it values the students for their work rather than accuracy. He states:

Even when praising significant achievements, it is better to focus on the effort and care that the student put into the work, on the gains in knowledge or skills that the achievement represents, or on the achievement's more noteworthy features than to portray the achievement as evident of the student's intelligence or aptitude (p. 330).

In all classrooms the use of praise for students' hard work was perceived as more meaningful to the child and indicated the teacher's appreciation of their effort.

Students who are praised for achievement were adamant on continuing to do well in order to receive even more praise. However, as seen in studies like those completed by Kohn (1999), although praise expresses approval and admiration, it also fosters dependency on outside approval. In interviews, teachers described how students continued to do well in hopes of receiving more rewards.

Reasons for Praise. During this study, sufficient evidence was found that praise is used in two very different ways. Praise can be used to acknowledge effort, and praise can be used to recognize achievement. Multiple observations and interviews reinforced the conclusion that children praised for their efforts develop the attitude that even with difficult tasks, they can succeed. A sincere and specific praising compliment encouraged students to try their best. These encouraging words raised awareness rather than applied pressure because they emphasized what the child did right (Georgiou, 2008). With this awareness, the child desires to and can replicate a job well done whenever he or she chooses. Students were able to feel secure in the knowledge that they will know just what they need to do the next time around.

Each teacher in this study used more praise than punishment. This method seemed to work for them as they noted in their interviews that consequences occasionally do change behaviors temporarily, but rarely leave a lasting impression. Using consequences more than rewards may have increased the time spent with a problematic student, therefore indirectly rewarding that student with desired attention. Unlike praise, punishment taught students only what not to do. Praise, on the other hand, encourages

students to use skills to do what is expected of them, much like intrinsic motivation (Maclellan, 2005). Praise and positive reinforcement may actually improve a variety of positive changes in attitude, including self-esteem (Crespo, 2001). Investigating the differences between praise and punishment would be of great interest in a future study. As a novice teacher, it is important to find out what works in the classroom. By investigating the differences between praise and punishment, novice teachers can distinguish appropriately using them in an educational setting.

Each research question was sufficiently answered as a result of the variety of tools used for data collection. This multiplicity allowed for a thorough review of what was learned. The many findings also raised new questions and offered a glimpse into different questions that could be posed in further research studies.

Limitations and Recommendations

Limitations. The limitations of this particular study stemmed from the small sample group of teachers used to conduct research. The teachers chosen were from one grade within one district. This small sample size of only six teachers possibly limited the generalization of findings to other teachers in other grades. This study also focused solely on the use of praise by upper elementary teachers. Recognizing teachers' propensity to use praise, this research found the sample group provided a strong insight into how teachers use praise and the reasons for their use of praise.

When addressing the trustworthiness of any study, the audience is tasked with ascertaining the many components of trustworthiness. These components include

credibility, dependability, and transferability. These three aspects of trustworthiness offer a better-rounded perspective for determining the trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility results from the ability of the study to show it accurately describes reality. This study used real-life experiences to gain a better understanding of the use of praise between novice and veteran teachers (Guba, 1981). Therefore, it accurately represents what is occurring among today's public teachers. Credibility also relies on the ability of the researcher to correctly analyze and formulate findings. As a novice researcher, this was a first largely planned study. Due to extensive coursework and proven success the methods of research, this study may be deemed credible based on its use of background knowledge combined with the researcher's rigor.

Dependability deals with consistency and most often is addressed through the conditions of plentiful detail about the context and setting of the study (Guba, 1981). Dependability was achieved in the previous chapters of this research study when the context and setting of the study were described in extensive detail.

Transferability relies to the ability of applying the findings of one study to another context (Guba, 1981). Due to the widespread use of praise in all areas of life, this study provides a much higher rate of transferability than does the average study. The findings addressed general questions that can be taken and related to another context or field of study.

Besides the results of these three components, trustworthiness was further achieved through triangulation, audit, and keen description of the context. A few specific

areas required obtaining permissions before conducting research. One of these was videotaping in the classroom. Teachers needed to agree on having a video camera in their classroom. This study also required permission slips be signed by the students' parents in order to use their graded work as part of data collection (Appendix C). Finally, written guarantees were provided to the participants (or their legal guardians) that the identity of all participants remained confidential.

As stated in previous chapters, member checks involved the periodic questioning of all members to ensure their safety and comfort during the research process. Member checks were important because they ensure all the participants maintain their willingness to participate (Patton, 1990). This checking, in turn, generated a valid and reliable study.

In addition, an audit trail assisted in recording all the interviews and compiling the data. The audit trail was important because it served as a hard copy of the data compiled throughout the research process. This way, if there were ever any future questions, a document or file easily can be retrieved.

Finally, memoing was important because it offered an ongoing form of research. One often may find that the most significant findings are those noted when simply observing versus conducting solely formal interviews or completing surveys.

Suggestions for Future Research. As research was conducted in preparation for this study, differing opinions emerged on the effectiveness of praise. Further research likely would ascertain how well students perform with versus without praise, rather than observing how teachers use praise. It could be valuable to quantitatively determine how

students respond to praise or the lack thereof. The interviews offered a small glimpse into what various teachers thought about praise. Novice teachers, then can see how to create the most productive learning environment for future students and determine the effectiveness of praise on students. Further studies also could determine ways to constructively incorporate appropriate usage of praise into the novices' classrooms. All of the teachers interviewed in this study noted that praise was positive, necessary, and also fit the needs of students. This tied in with the research of the positives of praise as stated in (Chalk 2004, Stringer 1981). Two, of the observed teachers interviewed, discussed how students praise lost meaning when it was used excessively and then interpreted it as insincere. These were the only negative effects inherently related to praise. All teachers' views related to praise were opposite of Kohn (1999) who believed praise is an unnecessary addition to the classroom.

In further studies it would be interesting to see which form teachers use more often and how teachers distinguish between both feedback and praise. Personally, it is very important to all teachers as we are trying to create the most positive classroom environment for our students and their self-esteem (Crespo, 2001). A further study might determine if feedback or praise, as defined in this study, is better at motivating students and helping them to succeed.

Implications for Practitioners. More recently districts around the United States are adopting teacher evaluation systems that align with the newly adopted nation-wide common core state standards. These evaluation systems provide opportunities for growth

and reflection. They also enable educators to collaborate regularly with their peers as well as meet with their administrators (Marzano, 2012).

One particular evaluation system is tied directly to Robert Marzano's ever-popular research dealing with the strategies and behaviors necessary in being an effective educator (2007). Within his evaluation system, he has created various domains that focus on these strategies and behaviors. More specifically, one domain deals directly with setting for high expectations for high achievement as well as celebrating success.

Within this domain, teachers are able to carefully craft responses that serve to motivate their students. These statements can come in the form of specific feedback as well as verbal and tangible praise. Marzano believes that carefully crafted statements of verbal feedback and praise can successfully lead a student in a direction that results in higher effort and achievement (2012).

In relation to this study, novice and veteran teachers are able to use the study's findings as well as Marzano's suggestions in the new evaluation system to aid in producing the most valuable form of feedback and praise. By doing so, both novice and veteran teachers are able to reflect on their feedback and motivational strategies and are able to make changes that best fit the needs of their students. This, in turn creates the most welcoming, safe, and optimal learning environment for students will undoubtedly result in higher levels of effort and achievement.

Conclusion

The literature review contained many pertinent topics to the study at hand. An abundant amount of information was found that all related to the use of praise in the classroom. In order to avoid repetitiveness, it was important that only the most meaningful literature was included in the review. Therefore, the literature of review was synthesized and broken down into themes. These literature themes provided a foundation for the purpose of the study.

To aid in collecting the appropriate data necessary to answering the research questions, participants were asked to complete a fifteen-question interview that included questions about their attitudes, beliefs, and suggestions for using praise in the classroom. They were also involved in observations, which led to the creation of checklists, field notes, and many document examinations.

The particular method for collecting research in this study was hermeneutical phenomenology. Phenomenology is unique because it studies a particular phenomenon in order to gain meaning from experiences. The particular phenomenon in this study was the use of praise. The hermeneutical component of this method allowed for the experiences to be interpreted through the lens of the teachers involved.

When using a phenomenological method of research, it is important to follow the three components of reduction, description, and searching for essences. These three components were suggested by the researcher known as Giorgi (2006). It was important when performing data analysis that these components were constantly revisited. In order

to so, data was collected, reduced, and then examined for common themes. These themes gave meaning to the many experiences of the teachers in this study.

The participants for this study were selected based on the grade levels that they currently teach. First, the superintendent of the participating school was contacted to gain permission to conduct research within the school system. Secondly, the principal of the selected school was contacted to explain the study and to ask permission to contact teachers in order to secure volunteer participants. In turn, six participants were formally secured. Finally, consent forms were sent to each participant to explain the study and to set up dates for observations and interviews.

For the purpose of this study data on the participants was collected in a variety of ways. The participants were asked to complete a fifteen-question interview. Following the interview, they were observed in their classroom for at least two hours. These two hours did not need to be consecutive. To aid in collecting data, the observations were recorded allowing for easy recall. From the observations, field notes and checklists were created documenting the many occurrences of praise in the classroom.

In addition to interviews and observations, work samples were collected to aid in the examining of the use of praise on student work. This led to an extensive document examination process that provided much insight into the way teachers communicate positive messages with their students.

The findings of this study directly answered the research questions at hand. These questions included:

Research Question #1: *How do novice and veteran teachers differ in their use of praise?*

Research Question #2: *What are the pros and cons of praise in the classroom?*

Research Question #3: *Why do teachers use praise in the classroom?*

As a result of the study, one may note that novice and veteran teachers do, in fact, differ in their use of praise. More specifically, novice teachers tend to use more broad statements of praise as well as tangible items. Veteran teachers, on the other hand, use less praise but provide more directive and focused feedback.

This particular study addressed the second research question relating to the pros and cons of praise. Many of these pros and cons were initially found in relevant literature and the research study served to prove them to be accurate. The pros of praise included such components as praise serving as an intrinsic motivating tool. The main con of praise was that many students end up depending on praise and if it is not received or directed to a particular behavior, they may be left with little to no motivation.

Finally the research study found that teachers use praise in the classroom for a variety of reasons. The two main reasons praise was used in the classroom was to provide feedback for effort and achievement. This was a major way that a teacher could communicate their expectations or excitement to their students. Teachers felt that as a result students were left with a sense of accomplishment and were able to continue to intrinsically motivate themselves during future tasks.

In conclusion, this study was largely founded on Christian faith. My educational worldview is that of a Christian worldview. I believe we are a product of God's creation. We are here to preside over the universe and provide fellowship to Him (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:15). Jesus Christ is our prophet and is the word of God (John 1). Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we were able to redeem ourselves from sin to God Himself (Genesis 3:15). As a Christian, I believe all things are possible through Christ. This includes miracles as well as redemption.

I believe we are able to apply God's truth in all areas of our being; especially education. To me, it is important to remember that whether or not I am simply performing a daily task or making one of the hardest decisions of my life, I am able to develop my faith to stand the tests of time as well as those who may disagree. I believe by embracing God's truth I am able to make the right decisions during tough times as well as positively affect all other areas of my life with the integrity and righteousness of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

As a Christian, I willingly accept other's beliefs; however, I stand firmly beside my own. I feel we are all entitled to our rights as human beings to say and believe as we please but my purpose is to follow the word of our Savior. I believe individual decisions and actions reveal the true beliefs of an individual and therefore, I am happy to see Jesus Christ remains in the lives of every believer and his actions shine through.

I believe we are responsible for taking every one of our thoughts and actions captive to obey Christ (2 Cor 10:5). When we are able to do this, our surroundings are

immediately affected in a positive way and our actions mirror the integrity and righteousness of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We have the duty to provide these opportunities to our children as well. I hope this study will serve as a source to educators hoping to ensure the most optimal and inviting learning environment for their students.

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APPENDIX A

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Investigator: Thank you for allowing me the time to interview you today. Please take your time and answer these questions as honestly as possible. If at any moment you feel uncomfortable, please let me know and we can terminate our interview.

- Please tell me about a time when praise made a difference for one of your students
- Do you think that teachers use praise effectively? (i.e., used too much, too little, not in the right way) What are your suggestions for using praise more effectively?
- How should praise be used to validate effort or ability? Explain.
- How do you think praise is used differently in different subjects? Do you think praise should be used differently in different subjects?
- There are many critics of praise who claim it can, in fact, decrease intrinsic motivation, how do you feel about that?
- How have the benefits or drawbacks of using praise been evident in your classroom?
- What is your philosophy concerning use of praise with students?
- How do you use praise differently with different students? Subject areas? Times of day?

- What kind of discipline system do you use? Do you think this affects your use of praise?
- What are your feelings about using positive reinforcement? Punishment?
- What kind of differences do you think are the biggest between veteran and novice teachers?
- How do you think these differences affect their use of praise?
- In which areas do you feel you use praise the most? (e.g., effort, achievement, etc.)
- In what ways do you think you used praise differently when you were a novice teacher?
- In what ways do you think you will use praise differently when you are a veteran teacher?

Investigator: I appreciate the thought and consideration you have given in answering these questions for me today. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my faculty advisor at any point.

APPENDIX B

Appendix B

Recruitment Email

Dear _____,

My name is Kristen McGuire. I am developing a research proposal for my doctoral dissertation at Liberty University titled “How Teachers Use Praise in Upper Elementary Classrooms”. I am requesting your permission to participate in my study by completing a survey as well as allowing me to observe in your classroom. Please find attached a copy of the survey that I plan to use for my research.

I am not requesting email addresses, phone numbers, mailing addresses or any personally identifying information. My survey does not ask for any personally identifying information; the study participant’s identification will be completely anonymous.

I must first obtain official approvals from my university and you. The intent of this email is to request your permission to complete my survey and allow me to observe you in your classroom. Once I have all of the appropriate permission letters, I will begin setting up times to observe you.

If you are not the person in charge of approving this type of request I would very much appreciate if you would forward the name and contact information of the person I should communicate with. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you by phone if

that would be helpful. In addition, I would be happy to provide any further information you may require in order to make a decision.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kristen McGuire

703-434-9641

kristendmcguire@gmail.com

APPENDIX C

Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

You are invited to be in a research study of how praise is used in upper elementary classrooms. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a sixth grade teacher in the Medical Lake School District. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Kristen McGuire, Liberty University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Baer, Liberty University

Background Information:

This study is geared towards addressing how and why teachers use praise in the elementary classroom. More specifically, the focus of the study will be to determine how novice and veteran teachers differ in their use of praise in terms of praising for effort and achievement. This research study is significant because it offers an insight into how praise may positively correlate to academic effort and achievement. The study also provides implications for both novice and veteran teachers in terms of how to praise to increase effort and achievement.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

You will be asked to allow me to observe your classroom for at least two hours. These observations will include the use of a video recorder. This may take more than one visit based on your availability. You will also be asked to answer interview questions and to provide graded work samples.

Your participation will take approximately four hours over the course of the research project.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study includes minimal risk. There are no more risks than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The use of a videotape may be required which could cause some form of emotional discomfort.

There are no direct benefits to the participants of this study. In terms of society and upon completion of the research study, the procedures of this study will lead to the gaining of a richer understanding of classroom management and the affects it has on students. This is advantageous to teachers as it is part of their daily routine in terms of classroom management.

Compensation:

You will not be given a monetary compensation for this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only researchers will have access to the records.

There will be many safety nets in place throughout my study to ensure the privacy of my participants. As you are recruited you will be emailed on a private basis. The names of my participants will not be shared with anyone else. My participants will also be required to fill out an informed consent agreement, which will provide them with an understanding of what to expect from my study. Any data I collect from them in the form of videotapes and surveys will be kept strictly confidential. This information will only be seen by and reviewed by the researcher. It will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Throughout this study, I will continue to maintain the confidentiality of my participants. In the initial stages of gathering participants, I will choose to 'blind copy' all other possible participants on recruitment emails. As I begin to collect data, I will be sure to strip all of my data of names and any other identifying factors. The data I will not be able to strip is the videotapes in which I see the participant involved. To protect

confidentiality, I will keep these video recordings and all of my data at home in a secured room. The videotapes will not be used for anything beyond analysis for the research study. As I commute to and from the research site, I will keep all of my data in a secured briefcase. This way, I will be the only individual that comes in contact with the data as I begin my collection and analysis.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or with the Medical Lake School District. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time with out affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Kristen McGuire. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 70-434-9641 or kristendmcguire@gmail.com. You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Daniel Baer, at 919-539-9094 or dnbaer@liberty.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional

Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582,
Lynchburg, VA 24502, or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

I give my permission to be filmed during classroom observations.

Yes_____

No_____

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature:_____ Date:

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date:

APPENDIX D

Appendix D
Parental Consent Form I

March 1, 2012

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As a doctoral candidate, I will be completing a required project in your child's classroom from April 2012 to June 2012 that is part of the doctoral program at Liberty University. The purpose of my project is to explore how teachers use praise in the classroom.

Recording or filming me in the classroom is a valuable tool in studying the effectiveness of my own teaching. Because I wish to audio and/or videotape teaching episodes, there is a chance your child may be taped as well. The identities of the child, the teacher, and the school will remain confidential. Not providing consent will not impair your child's opportunities to participate in the project activities. I will make arrangements with your child's teacher in order to keep them from being filmed. Should you change your mind, you can rescind or activate this permission at any time.

The audio and video recordings that I collect will be used only for the purpose of studying and improving my teaching and will NOT be shown to anyone outside the project. Once the project has been completed the recordings will be destroyed.

This project has been listed with the Liberty University Institutional Review Board. Please return this form by **March 30, 2012**.

Thank you,

Kristen McGuire

I, _____, give consent for my child _____ to be videotaped for the purposes of this study.

() I give consent for samples of my child's work to be copied for purposes of this study.

I understand that all copies will be used for educational purposes only and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project. Names of students, teachers and schools will be kept strictly confidential.

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

(Date)

() I am interested in receiving a summary of the project.

APPENDIX E

Appendix E

Parental Consent Form II

Your child is invited to be included in a research study of how praise is used in upper elementary classrooms. Your student was selected to be included because they have a sixth grade teacher in the Medical Lake School District. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Kristen McGuire, Liberty University under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Baer, Liberty University

Background Information:

This study is geared towards addressing how and why teachers use praise in the elementary classroom. More specifically, the focus of the study will be to determine how novice and veteran teachers differ in their use of praise in terms of praising for effort and achievement. This research study is significant because it offers an insight into how praise may positively correlate to academic effort and achievement. The study also provides implications to both novice and veteran teachers in terms of how to praise to increase effort and achievement.

Procedures:

If you agree to have your child included in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Your child may be captured on film during the recording of all teacher participants.

These observations will include the use of a video recorder. This may take more than one visit based on the teacher's availability. Your child's work may also be viewed to examine the feedback offered by your child's teacher.

Your student's possible interaction in the study will take approximately four hours over the course of the research project

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study includes minimal risk. There are no more risks than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The use of a videotape may be required which could cause some form of emotional discomfort.

There are no direct benefits to the participants of this study. In terms of society and upon completion of the research study, the procedures of this study will lead to the gaining of a richer understanding of classroom management and the affects it has on students. This is advantageous to teachers as it is part of their daily routine in terms of classroom management.

Compensation:

You will not be given a monetary compensation for this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

There will be many safety nets in place throughout my study to ensure the privacy of my participants. As you are recruited you will be emailed on a private basis. The names of my participants will not be shared with anyone else. My participants will also be required to fill out an informed consent agreement, which will provide them with an understanding of what to expect from my study. Any data I collect from them in the form of videotapes and surveys will be kept strictly confidential. This information will only be seen by and reviewed by me. It will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Throughout this study, I will continue to maintain the confidentiality of my participants. In the initial stages of gathering participants, I will choose to 'blind copy' all other possible participants on recruitment emails. As I begin to collect data, I will be sure to strip all of my data of names and any other identifying factors. The data I will not be able to strip is the videotapes in which I see the participant involved. To protect

confidentiality, I will keep these video recordings and all of my data at home in a secured room. The videotapes will not be used for anything beyond analysis for the research study. As I commute to and from the research site, I will keep all of my data in a secured briefcase. This way, I will be the only individual that comes in contact with the data as I begin my collection and analysis.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or with the Medical Lake School District. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time with out affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Kristen McGuire. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 703-434-9641 or kristendmcguire@gmail.com. You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Daniel Baer, at 919-539-9094 or dnbaer@liberty.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional

Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582,
Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I give permission for my child to be filmed and have his or her work sampled in this study. Please check one and provide a signature.

Yes _____

No _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date:

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date:

APPENDIX F

Appendix F

Interview Results

Teacher Albert Interview

(All prompts appear in italics)

Please tell me about a time when praise made a difference for one of your students

Praise made a difference for one of my students when they were struggling to complete a STAR test. This STAR test provided me with information on the student's abilities in math. The student was frustrated because the questions were getting progressively harder. It was important for me to tell the student to keep up the hard work. As a result, the student passed with flying colors.

Do you think that teachers use praise effectively? (i.e. used too much, too, little, not in the right way) What are your suggestions for using praise more effectively?

I think most teachers use praise effectively. I know there is a tendency to give too much or too little. To avoid this, I would be sure to make everything meaningful to each student.

How should praise be used to validate effort or ability? Explain.

I think praise helps the student determine what they are doing well and what they need to work on. Specifically, it provides the students with a starting point as to where they need to improve and/or make changes. Praise should be used to validate effort and ability because it will help students to continue to reach their goals and strive to do their best.

How do you think praise is used differently in different subjects? Do you think praise should be used differently in different subjects?

In math and science, praise is needed to help students determine what strategies they are using correctly. This feedback allows the students to ask questions if they are facing difficulties. In contrast, if the student is being praised for correct answers, it is an affirmation to what they are doing correctly. I do think praise should be used differently in different subjects as each requires different strategies.

There are many critics of praise who claim it can, in fact, decrease intrinsic motivation, how do you feel about that?

I don't really agree with that statement. I think any form of praise is used to encourage a student. I have always had good experiences with using praise.

How have the benefits or drawbacks of using praise been evident in your classroom?

The benefits of praise have been most evident when preparing for state tests. As we prepare for state tests, students can often get burnt out and they need more positive reinforcement to stay encouraged and motivated.

What is your philosophy concerning use of praise with students?

I am all for using praise in my classroom. I would recommend it to other teachers as well. Specifically, I would encourage other teachers to use it with students that may have more difficulties in terms of academics.

How do you use praise differently with different students? Subject areas? Times of day?

I think I use praise mostly in math when we come to the correct answer to a problem. As a class, we discuss our strategies and we repeat them out loud together. Math can be a subject that tends to frustrate students. It is important for me to maintain a positive climate. I probably am more inclined to praise students who are struggling academically or who have difficult home lives.

What kind of discipline system do you use? Do you think this affects your use of praise?

I don't have a firm discipline system in place. Instead, I tend to deal with issues as they occur. I'm not sure this directly affects my use of praise.

What are your feelings about using positive reinforcement? Punishment?

I think positive reinforcement is more important than punishment. It allows the student to focus on positive behaviors rather than negative ones.

What kind of differences do you think are the biggest between veteran and novice teachers?

I think veteran teachers are more aware of how they are using praise and the possible outcomes that may occur. Novice teachers tend to focus more on using praise to help with their classroom management.

How do you think these differences affect their use of praise?

I think this leads to a stereotype of novice teachers offering too much praise and veteran teachers giving too little. Novice teachers tend to praise more and want to please their students/others in the school. Veterans find a balance between the two: earning respect of their students [and] minimizing the punishment and balancing out the praise.

In which areas do you feel you use praise the most? (i.e. effort, achievement)

I definitely use more praise with effort. Students need to hear when they are on the right path. They are more aware of when they have completed something correctly.

In what ways do you think you used praise differently when you were a novice teacher?

I honestly didn't think about how I was using praise in my classroom. These days, I try to be a lot more intentional.

Teacher Bonnie Interview

Please tell me about a time when praise made a difference for one of your students

I had a student who came from a large family where there were several toddlers and babies at home. The student complained that she rarely had quiet time to read at home. Praising her for her efforts toward silent reading helped the student. She was able to find time at her grandparents' home and school where she could focus on her reading. This student had become behind in reading because of the lack of homework support at home. Praising her helped her not give up and not become further behind.

Do you think that teachers use praise effectively? (i.e. used too much, too, little, not in the right way) What are your suggestions for using praise more effectively?

I think that most teachers are able to gear praise toward students individually. Depending on their home situations, they may be used to positive comments or negative comments. Some students start out very defensively when they are given feedback. Over time teachers can build relationships of trust with students, which allow them to use both praise and constructive feedback.

How should praise be used to validate effort or ability? Explain.

Specific praise helps encourage student effort. Also, positive comments help the overall morale and climate of a classroom. I think that ability is what the student enters the classroom with, so I tend to gear my praise more toward effort.

How do you think praise is used differently in different subjects? Do you think praise should be used differently in different subjects?

In Language Arts and Writing, in particular, praise and criticism are needed to show students when they are making grammatical mistakes or need help with style. By listening to this feedback, students can greatly improve writing. Encouragement for turning in assignments, working hard, and participating should also lead to a better product. On the other hand, if students receive praise that is unwarranted or praise without suggestions, they could work less hard. In Math, a student gets most of the feedback in writing. It is often geared to a right or wrong answer. This simplifies praise in a math classroom setting.

There are many critics of praise who claim it can, in fact, decrease intrinsic motivation; how do you feel about that?

I think that a teacher noticing what students are doing well helps. Some students receive mostly negative comments at home. I can also see that in parenting, over praising can lead to an overblown sense of entitlement. There needs to be a good balance between praise and constructive criticism. Praise should be specific. For instance, “You used transition words well in your essay.” Instead of “good writing.”

How have the benefits or drawbacks of using praise been evident in your classroom?

I have had some very compliant and agreeable students in the past. I often praise them because they are so helpful. This has backfired a few times when these students have not passed the M.S.P. I have perceived that they understand because they are so compliant. These students may have needed more directive feedback.

What is your philosophy concerning use of praise with students?

I like to give as much specific praise as I can, but I pair it with suggestions and constructive criticism. Certain students may need more praise because they have low self-esteem and have stopped trying. In those situations, I give more praise to get students to join in and start trying.

How do you use praise differently with different students? Subject areas? Times of day?

Writing is a subject in which I give a lot of feedback. In contrast, I use a lot of projects in social studies and science classes. Students are given feedback in these classes through the use of rubrics. While rubrics are more generalized and objective, they may seem less like true praise to students.

What kind of discipline system do you use? Do you think this affects your use of praise?

I use love and logic in my classroom. I have a list of specific rules as well. In extreme situations such as swearing, violence, and defiance, I use our school discipline system. Love and logic helps me focus on building a relationship of trust and respect with students. I try to notice specific things about their likes and dislikes and who they

are. This creates a positive classroom climate. It is not so much focused on praise, but on noticing who they are and validating them.

What are your feelings about using positive reinforcement? Punishment?

I believe in the old saying “You catch more flies with honey than vinegar.” Positive comments go a long way with students. When a teacher has built up trust with a student, student will respond to constructive feedback more openly. If that trust is not built up, the student will usually shut down.

What kind of differences do you think are the biggest between veteran and novice teachers?

I think that first year teachers sometimes try to please students and parents. They sometimes try to be more like a camp counselor. That being said, I have also seen many novice teachers hold students accountable and not try to befriend them. It depends a lot on the particular teacher

How do you think these differences affect their use of praise?

The stereotype of veteran teachers is that they stop using praise and only give negative feedback. A balance between positive and negative comments has to be found, whether the teacher is a novice or a veteran.

In which areas do you feel you use praise the most? (i.e. effort, achievement)

I think I use the most toward effort. I do this through verbal comments I make.

In what ways do you think you used praise differently when you were a novice teacher?

I was much more general in my praise. I didn't point out specific instances or give examples.

In what ways do you think you will use praise differently when you are a veteran teacher?

My hope is that I will learn the magic formula between praise and constructive criticism, particularly in the teaching of writing. I would hope that I can identify students who need help with self-esteem and meet all learners where they are. I guess I would like to be effective at "differentiating" my praise.

Teacher Caroline Interview

Please tell me about a time when praise made a difference for one of your students.

Praise made a difference for me when we were taking our state tests last month. The testing environment can be very rigorous and stressful. As teachers, we are not allowed to answer any questions. I had one student that wanted to ask me questions and I felt so bad not being able to help. Instead, I stood behind him and whispered words of encouragement into his ear. I told him to keep trying his hardest and I know it made a difference for him.

Do you think that teachers use praise effectively? (i.e. used too much, too, little, not in the right way) What are your suggestions for using praise more effectively?

I think teachers use praise too much. I know I am guilty of this. I praise for everything! It works for me! I know I should be more specific with what I say but I am still learning.

How should praise be used to validate effort or ability? Explain.

I think praise should be used to validate both. It is important to let the student know that their hard work is appreciated while also applauding them for a job well done. I use praise for both effort and achievement. I think that trying to get the answer is just as good as getting it.

How do you think praise is used differently in different subjects? Do you think praise should be used differently in different subjects?

In language arts, I use praise to help when we are working on writing. For some kids, writing comes so easy, and they are done in a matter of minutes. For others, it is quite the daunting process. I make sure to praise those students who finish for their achievement. I praise the students who have a harder time for their effort.

There are many critics of praise who claim it can, in fact, decrease intrinsic motivation; how do you feel about that?

I could see that happening. I know I need to be more specific in my praise to avoid decreasing intrinsic motivation. If praise is used too often, the same way all the time, it can decrease intrinsic motivation. When a teacher observes that the type of praise he or she is giving to the students is not creating a positive result, then the teacher needs to make changes. Most students will turn a deaf ear to the same praise, in the same way, for the same things. They know when a teacher is being truthful or is just making something up for the time being. Students will not become motivated if the praise is not rewarded in a variety of ways

How have the benefits or drawbacks of using praise been evident in your classroom?

The benefits are always evident in the attitudes of the students. It really creates a positive classroom climate. The drawbacks are when I give out tangible rewards. The kids can get really greedy and don't work for me if they know candy isn't involved.

What is your philosophy concerning use of praise with students?

I think every teacher should incorporate praise in some way in his or her classrooms. It really creates a positive relationship between the teachers and students.

How do you use praise differently with different students? Subject areas? Times of day?

I use praise mostly when we are working on writing. In terms of students, I use praise a lot more with my students that have behavior problems. I feel bad for praising them more but I am so focused on their behaviors throughout the day.

What kind of discipline system do you use? Do you think this affects your use of praise?

I have a "three strikes you are out" rule. I think it affects my use of praise as I am constantly reminding my students of expectations and acknowledging those who are behaving properly.

What are your feelings about using positive reinforcement? Punishment?

I think it all depends on the students in each class. Last year I used much more positive reinforcement. This year, I feel like I am sending students to the office left and right.

What kind of differences do you think are the biggest between veteran and novice teachers?

I think veteran teachers don't give out as much praise. They have learned what works and what doesn't. As a novice teacher, I use praise all of the time to help control my classroom behaviors. The more experience you have, the better you will get at discipline as well as praise.

How do you think these differences affect their use of praise?

Veteran teachers don't use praise as much and novice teachers use it much more often. I am learning from the veteran teachers! I like to observe my veteran teacher counterpart and see what works for her since I don't have as much experience as her. I then use that to my advantage and base my own management plan on the same ideals.

In which areas do you feel you use praise the most? (i.e. effort, achievement)

I use praise more for achievement. I like to acknowledge positive and on-task behaviors as well.

In what ways do you think you will use praise differently when you are a veteran teacher?

I hope to learn from those around me so that I can be more constructive when offering praise and feedback.

Teacher Donna Interview

Please tell me about a time when praise made a difference for one of your students.

Praise makes a difference for me every year in my classroom. This year in particular it helped me when I came back from maternity leave. I didn't have the same relationship with my students that the other teachers did. To fix this I was focused on

praising wherever and whenever I could. I needed to let the students know that I would be their biggest cheerleader.

Do you think that teachers use praise effectively? (i.e. used too much, too, little, not in the right way) What are your suggestions for using praise more effectively?

I think teachers use praise effectively. I think we all use it for different reasons but have the same positive intentions.

How should praise be used to validate effort or ability? Explain.

When students are working on an assignment, they need to know if they are doing something correctly. They also need encouragement along the way. I try to use praise to validate both effort and ability.

How do you think praise is used differently in different subjects? Do you think praise should be used differently in different subjects?

I use praise mostly in social studies. For some reason, this year in social studies has been pretty dry for the students. I have tried to differentiate my lessons to make them more exciting and fun. In addition to this, I included a lot of group work. When the students are engaged in group work, they need a lot of praise for behaviors.

There are many critics of praise who claim it can, in fact, decrease intrinsic motivation; how do you feel about that?

I'm not sure if I totally agree with that. I think it does the opposite.

How have the benefits or drawbacks of using praise been evident in your classroom?

Like I said, when coming back from maternity leave, praise really helped me build a positive rapport with my students. The incorporation of praise in my classroom led to a very welcoming environment. This positive communication instills good feelings within students, which fosters a warm, caring learning environment that they can succeed in education/life.

What is your philosophy concerning use of praise with students?

I am a firm advocate for praise. I think it fosters a healthy classroom climate. Praise is extremely necessary in building a child's self-esteem. They must know that they have worth or value.

How do you use praise differently with different students? Subject areas? Times of day?

I find myself using praise more with my students who are struggling. They are the ones that need more encouragement along the way. My gifted students are more independent and don't require as much encouragement.

What kind of discipline system do you use? Do you think this affects your use of praise?

In our class, we have a three strikes you are out rule. It affects our use of praise by the way we have set forth a set of rules for the students. We praise them when they follow those rules and are good classroom citizens.

What are your feelings about using positive reinforcement? Punishment?

I think both are very important to each and every classroom. Students need to be applauded. They also need to be told when they are not acting in an acceptable manner.

What kind of differences do you think are the biggest between veteran and novice teachers?

I'm not sure I see a lot of differences. If anything, I would say the amount that praise is present in each classroom. I think I use praise more so than my neighboring veteran counterpart.

How do you think these differences affect their use of praise?

Veteran teachers don't use as much because they are more specific with their feedback. I know the one teacher writes things on papers more than she articulates them. Perhaps she praises in her feedback on students' work.

In which areas do you feel you use praise the most? (i.e. effort, achievement)

Definitely achievement. I am happy when a student knows what is expected of them and in turn completes a task following all directions. I make sure to let them know I am pleased with the outcome.

In what ways do you think you will use praise differently when you are a veteran teacher?

I'm not sure how I will change in the future. I learn something new every year but tend to revert to how I already incorporate praise in the classroom.

Teacher Evie Interview

Please tell me about a time when praise made a difference for one of your students.

I had a student this year that I routinely butt heads with. I was under the impression that this student's home life was less than par. Once I realized this, I developed a plan to make this child's classroom experience as positive as I could. In

order to this, I used praise routinely when working with this child. I am positive it made a difference in his experience this year.

Do you think that teachers use praise effectively? (i.e. used too much, too, little, not in the right way) What are your suggestions for using praise more effectively?

I think most teachers are effective praise users. I make sure to always be careful with what I say to each student. There is a fine line between too much and too little praise with each student. It is important I know each student and what they need from me.

How should praise be used to validate effort or ability? Explain.

Praise should be used carefully and effectively in each classroom setting. Effort and ability are both important components to a child's success. As a teacher, I need to focus on the area that needs most attention for each specific child.

How do you think praise is used differently in different subjects? Do you think praise should be used differently in different subjects?

I am a math and science teacher. I find myself using praise more in math than in science. I think this naturally occurs because of the 'right and wrong' nature of math. By that, I mean there are right and wrong answers. I praise for achievement when a student gets the right answer to the math problem. We talk about how we got the right answer. I am sure I am really repetitive so that things stick.

There are many critics of praise who claim it can, in fact, decrease intrinsic motivation, how do you feel about that?

I am sure this could happen but have a hard time believing that it happens often. I think praise increases intrinsic motivation in the way it leaves the student motivated to succeed.

How have the benefits or drawbacks of using praise been evident in your classroom?

I have not witnessed any drawbacks. I'd like to think that I use praise effectively with all of my students, and we have all reaped the benefits together. We encourage and motivate one another.

What is your philosophy concerning use of praise with students?

I think there is a time and place for praise. By that, I mean that it isn't necessary all the time. It needs to be something that is earned.

How do you use praise differently with different students? Subject areas? Times of day?

I spoke about the student earlier. I praise more to the students that probably won't hear it as much at home. With my more academic students I tend to praise their grades etc. With my lower students, I tend to find their strengths, such as drawing, and praise on that behavior. A child who struggles academically, and one for whom learning comes more easily, both need praise because both need their self-esteem boosted.

What kind of discipline system do you use? Do you think this affects your use of praise?

We use tickets and dollars in our classroom. Tickets are handed out and taken away based on behaviors. I am using these tickets to help when praising for effort.

What are your feelings about using positive reinforcement? Punishment?

I use the tickets and dollars to incorporate positive reinforcement in my classroom. By handing these out I am making the students aware of which behaviors are garnering a positive response.

What kind of differences do you think are the biggest between veteran and novice teachers?

The younger teachers ask for a lot of advice. I am not sure they have a set plan for praising in place. Instead, they look to others for insight.

How do you think these differences affect their use of praise?

Veteran teachers have a more firm idea of what they incorporate in their classroom. They are very purposeful in all that they do. Veterans have more practical day-to-day experience, have tried more tricks, and have the experiences of other teacher to draw on when they need new ideas.

In which areas do you feel you use praise the most? (i.e. effort, achievement)

Because of my ticket and dollar system, I am using praise more for effort than anything.

In what ways do you think you used praise differently when you were a novice teacher?

I definitely didn't know as much as I do now. I have attended many professional development courses to make my delivery of praise more purposeful. Classroom management was not a strength of my undergraduate program. I have probably used praise more often as an experienced teacher.

Teacher Fran Interview

Please tell me about a time when praise made a difference for one of your students

This year was a very interesting year for me. Things certainly didn't go as planned. I had one student that was very arrogant in anything that he did. I didn't think he needed praise because he seemed so confident in himself. I was very wrong. I learned that this student was very insecure. He had put on a sort of façade. He needed more affirmation than I thought. I made sure to always tell him how impressed and proud I was of him. I think it really lifted his spirits and boosted his self-esteem.

Do you think that teachers use praise effectively? (i.e. used too much, too, little, not in the right way) What are your suggestions for using praise more effectively?

Once the teachers really get to know their students, I think they are able to use praise effectively. In the beginning of the year we are all trying to get things into place and probably overuse our praise. Once we have a routine, we are more intentional with our use of praise.

How should praise be used to validate effort or ability? Explain.

Effort and ability go hand-in-hand. With that being said, praise should always be used for both. Students need both encouragement and positive affirmation. The more positives you can give the more willing and receptive the students are to put forth more effort into their learning.

How do you think praise is used differently in different subjects? Do you think praise should be used differently in different subjects?

Math is where I find myself praising the most. I tend to repeat the correct answer a lot to make sure my students are getting it. I don't necessarily think praise should be used differently in different subjects, but I do believe that it is. In a tougher subject like math, praise is used to encourage students. In a subject like social studies, it might be used more for achievement.

There are many critics of praise who claim it can, in fact, decrease intrinsic motivation, how do you feel about that?

I think the critics are wrong. If used correctly, praise can be the most positive component of a classroom. It is a magical tool that can really change the whole attitude of a group of students into a positive one.

How have the benefits or drawbacks of using praise been evident in your classroom?

Praise has always been a magical tool in my classroom. It has brought me so many benefits. I use a lot of tangible rewards such as candy bars for achieving a certain score. This year, all but two of my students received candy bars, so I definitely think it worked as a tool for motivating students.

What is your philosophy concerning use of praise with students?

I use tangible rewards and know that some teachers may not agree, but praise is praise. It works!

How do you use praise differently with different students? Subject areas? Times of day?

I use it more in math and I offer the same thing to all of my students. This year I offered candy bars to students that achieved the average score or higher on our semester test.

What kind of discipline system do you use? Do you think this affects your use of praise?

I don't have a set system in place. Without a system in place, I use praise a lot to keep my students motivated and on task.

What are your feelings about using positive reinforcement? Punishment?

I use many tangible rewards for positive reinforcement. It gives my students an idea of what the prize is for good behavior. If they keep up their good behavior than they are rewarded. I guess the punishment would be not receiving the tangible reward.

What kind of differences do you think are the biggest between veteran and novice teachers?

Newer teachers are more apt to use more tangible items whereas veteran teachers have learned the language.

How do you think these differences affect their use of praise?

Veteran teachers are much more knowledgeable when it comes to the delivery of praise. They don't need to use tangible items as a crutch.

In which areas do you feel you use praise the most? (i.e. effort, achievement)

My tangible rewards are always focused on achievement.

In what ways do you think you will use praise differently when you are a veteran teacher?

I am sure years down the road my tangible rewards will disappear. Not only because they get expensive, but also because I will learn the language of the veteran teachers and more quality techniques for my classroom.

APPENDIX G

Appendix G

Additional Data Gathering Form

Is praise present in this classroom?

What are some examples of this teacher's verbal praise?

What are some examples of this teacher's tangible praise?

Do you notice this teacher using praise more for effort or achievement?

What type of praise and/or feedback does this teacher offer on student work?

APPENDIX H

Appendix H

Model for Coding Data

Initial read through of data	Identify specific portions of information	Label the portions of information to create categories and themes	Reduce the coinciding and redundancy of the categories and themes	Create a model including most important categories and themes
All pages of data	Portions of data	20 or more categories	10 or more categories	5-10 themes

Modified from Creswell, 2002, Figure 9.4, p. 266